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The abiding Sabbath

*She,* .....

THE  
ABIDING SABBATH:

AN ARGUMENT

FOR THE

PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

THE FLETCHER PRIZE ESSAY FOR 1884.

*BY REV. GEORGE ELLIOTT.*

“There remaineth, therefore, a Sabbath-keeping for the people  
of God.” HEB. 4:9.

*AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,*

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# THE FLETCHER PRIZE ESSAY.

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THE late Hon. RICHARD FLETCHER, of Boston, Mass., by his last will, placed in the hands of the Trustees of Dartmouth College a fund from the income of which they are to offer, once in two years, a prize of FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS for the essay best adapted to accomplish the purposes indicated by the testator as follows:

“In view of the numerous and powerful influences constantly active in drawing professed Christians into fatal conformity with the world, both in spirit and practice; in view also of the lamentable and amazing fact that Christianity exerts so little practical influence, even in countries nominally Christian, it has seemed to me that some good might be done by making permanent provision for obtaining and publishing once in two years a Prize Essay, setting forth truth and reasoning calculated to counteract such worldly influences, and impressing on the minds of all Christians a solemn sense of their duty to exhibit in their godly lives and conversation the beneficent effects of the religion they profess, and thus increase the efficiency of Christianity in Christian countries and recommend its acceptance to the heathen nations of the world.”

The above prize was offered, for the fifth time, in the month of January, 1883. And inasmuch as the Christian Sabbath or Lord's day is vitally related to all Christian life, the specific theme designated for the Essay was,

THE PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

The following gentlemen constituted the committee of award: Prof. William Thompson, D. D., Prof. Llewellyn Pratt, D. D., and Rev. George M. Stone, D. D., all of Hartford, Conn. After a careful and thorough examination the prize was awarded to an essay which proved to have been written by Rev. George Elliott, of West Union, Iowa, and which is contained in the present volume.

SAMUEL C. BARTLETT,  
PRESIDENT OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE.

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, Sept., 1884.

## P R E F A C E .

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THIS book has been written in the full conviction that fresh discussion of this great question is a want of to-day. While little that is new may be stated, yet it is hoped that the old facts and arguments have been freshly put and so arranged as to lead to the one definite conviction of the perpetual obligation of the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day.

Many works of much value have been written on the Sabbath; but most of them have been marred either by an under-estimate of the obligation of the day, or by a reckless over-statement of facts in its defence. It is hoped that these defects have been in some measure avoided in these pages. No fact has been introduced which has not been traced to its final authority. In Scripture interpretation it has been sought to present only the results of candid exegesis, and no argument has been adduced simply for the purpose of making a point, but only in the full belief of its validity. Statements of possible value; facts not fully established, but having some probability; and arguments of only partial validity, when introduced at all, are, it is hoped, so fully guarded by cautious statement as to mislead no one.

The writer acknowledges his special indebtedness to Hessey's Bampton Lectures on "Sunday" for direction to those sources of information, historical, patristic, and scientific, which must settle the question in the last resort.

May the blessing of the Lord of the Sabbath rest on this and every honest effort to commend his day to the reason and conscience of mankind!

WEST UNION, Iowa.

G. E.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE political, commercial, and social life of Christendom is cast in a seven-fold rhythm. Upon the restlessness of the work-day world and upon its clamoring voices fall the stillness and repose of the seventh day. From office, shop, and field the busy tide of life withdraws to worship at the altars of Christ, or at least by some form of recreation to relieve the tension of the week.

Widely varied, indeed, is the observance of its hours, from the solemn stillness of a Scotch town to that holiday gayety of a German city so vividly pictured by Goethe in his "Faust." But in the particular of cessation in some degree from the common business of life, the custom is the same throughout Christian lands. There is perhaps no religious institution which is so patent to all observation as this.

How shall we account for this institution which has set its mark so deeply in the life of the conquering nations of the world? It comes to us an inheritance from the past; the hoar-frost of the centuries is upon it, but it still bears the fresh and vigorous life of youth. Sacrificial fires have faded into lifeless ashes; altars have crumbled and temples have decayed; old customs, insti-

tutions, and manners the world has cast off as worn-out garments; but this abides, surviving the fateful fortunes of sixty centuries, unharmed by the touch of time. And as we regard it more closely, more serious questions come to light. Is the Sabbath but a well-meant and valued form for the shaping and discipline of our life? or is there within it a spiritual meaning, a moral reason by which it may give the law to the conscience of man and demand obedience by the highest sanctions of duty? Is it only a custom received with our religion from an Asian people? or has it those marks of universality and moral necessity which make it permanently obligatory upon every age of history and every race of mankind? And can we take a still higher ground, and assert that for this institution we have the continued authority of the divine will and Word?

These questions are vital to the very existence of the Sabbath. Such is the constitution of human nature that no rule of conduct is able to impose itself upon mankind. No conviction of its benefits, and no sentiment, even of duty, in the matter can have any power permanently to enforce any course of human conduct without the higher sanctions of religion. The Sabbath must stand or fall as men regard it or not as of divine legislation and authority.

The special difficulty of the subject lies in the external character of the Sabbath itself; that is, in the very fact that it is an institution. To our common thought the moral law is something inward and spiritual, and not outward and material; it must speak to us from a

realm transcending time and space, and is ever conceived as something disenthralled of the world of sense. The Sabbath, on the other hand, has its very being in time; time is the material of its existence; it is set in the world of appearance and sense. This it is which most largely makes it difficult to feel the absolute obligation of its observance. The shadow of ceremonialism which rests over the Lord's day has too often hidden, even from clearest spiritual vision, the profound ethical foundations on which it stands. It becomes confounded with those "times and seasons" and external rites which are acknowledged to be the formal element in all religion. It is the purpose of the following pages to disengage the Sabbath from the network of outward ceremony in which in thought it has been too closely entwined, and to show that it contains permanent elements of character, an inward significance and a moral necessity which give to it an abiding force and authority above that which belongs to the passing economy of even the most instructive ceremonial system. It will be shown that some such contact between the worlds of spirit and sense as the Sabbath affords is necessary; that only through such an institution can the moral realm fully and closely touch and influence the outward life of humanity; and that this form is such as not to obstruct the life of the spirit, but to give it a larger freedom. Above all, it will be shown that the Sabbath is marked with the divine signature, and has upon it a seal of authority given by God himself; that he has repeatedly enacted it for man's good and his own glory.

The following proposition will be maintained :

*The Lord's day, or Christian Sabbath, being an institution founded in the moral order of the world, being necessary to the highest well-being of man, and being enforced by the positive precepts of divine revelation, is therefore of universal and perpetual obligation.*

In support of this proposition it will be shown,

1. That history, observation, and experience unite in affirming the necessity of the Sabbath. There is a Sabbath of nature, instituted at the Creation by God the Creator.

2. That the Sabbath has received the high sanction of divine revelation in the Sabbath of the Law, ordained by the God of providence for his people.

3. That the observance of the Christian Lord's day in the most perfect manner satisfies the obligation thus proven. This is the Sabbath of redemption, given by God the Redeemer in his resurrection from the dead.

4. The Sabbaths of creation, providence, and grace are manifestations of one abiding Sabbath, the earthly type of the Sabbath of eternity.

PART I.

SABBATH OF NATURE.





# SABBATH OF NATURE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ORDINANCE OF CREATION.

“And He, with gracious smile, received our praise,  
Lingering enamored o’er his new-made world,  
The latest counsel of his love, the while  
The earth her earliest, holiest Sabbath kept,  
Gladdened with new seraphic symphonies  
And the first echo of the human voice.”

BICKERSTETH.

“The first creation of God in the works of the days was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of his Spirit.”

BACON.

THE Sabbath is an institution as old as the completion of the world. It marked the end of the Creator’s work and the beginning of man’s existence. It shares with marriage the glory of being the sole relics saved to the fallen race from their lost paradise. One is the foundation of the family, and consequently of the state; the other is equally necessary to worship and the church.

These two fair and fragrant roses man bore with him from the blighted bliss of Èden.

It is not, however, the mere fact of age that lends sacredness to these institutions, for years alone cannot give consecration or compel regard to anything which does not possess in itself some inherent sanctity and dignity. It is in the circumstances of its first institution and in its essential character that we must hope to discover the necessity and holiness of the Sabbath day.

“God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” Gen. 2:3. Such is the sublimely simple statement which forms the last strain of that magnificent hymn of creation which is our only glimpse into the beginning of things. It is surely consistent with sound common sense and sound interpretation to see in these words much more than a mere anticipation of the theocratic Sabbath of Israel. It seems absurd to express in words what some have implied in their reasonings on this passage: “God rested on the seventh day; therefore 2,500 years afterwards he blessed and sanctified it.” The same form of language is used to describe what took place on the seventh day as in relating what took place in the six preceding days.

It is certain that a first reading of this passage

conveys to the mind the idea that the sanctification of the Sabbath as a day of rest took place at the very close of the creative week. That such was the case would, probably, never have been denied if the denial had not been necessary to support a peculiar view. Doubt in regard to this proleptic interpretation is sustained by the recent discovery of mention of a day of rest in the Assyrian account of creation, which is believed to antedate Moses by nearly six hundred years, and the further discovery of the actual observance of a Sabbath in Babylonia long before the time of the Mosaic institution.\* Is not God saving his facts in Egyptian tombs, on Assyrian bricks, and in all historic remains everywhere, that, at every crisis of his truth, when even the mouths of believers are silenced by the tumult of doubt, the very "stones" may "cry out"?

Our view of this passage is further confirmed by the word "remember" in the Fourth Commandment as coupled with the reason at the end of that commandment. So far as Scripture testimony can go, as enforced by archæological evidence—and no other proofs are available—the Sabbath is an ordinance of creation. When we further see how necessary it is to the whole nature of man, how indispensable to his highest

\* See Chapter 6 on "The Primitive Sabbath."

well-being, we are compelled to believe that it must have been given to man at the beginning if he were to be fully equipped for his mission in the world.

A special authority attaches itself to the primitive revelation. Whatever critical opinions may assert concerning the early history of the world, to the Christian the testimony of Jesus Christ remains in force to the high obligation of the Edenic law. In reprobating the corruptions of the marriage relation which had arisen under the Mosaic code, he reverts to the primitive law; "From the beginning it was not so." That is to say, the law of the beginning is supreme. Whatever institutions were given to man then were given for all time. There is given thus to marriage, and to its related institution, the Sabbath, a permanent character and authority which transcend the Hebrew legislation in their universal and abiding force. Those elements of truth which were given to the infant race are the possession of humanity, and not of the Jew alone: they are the alphabet of all the growing knowledge of man, not to be forgotten as the world grows old, but to be borne with him in all his wanderings, to last through all changes, and be his guide up those rugged steps by which he must climb to the lofty summits of his nobler destiny.

1. *The Sabbath, being an ordinance of creation, is a universal and permanent institution.*

Not to a single race, but to man; not to man alone, but to the whole creation; not to the created things alone, but to the Creator himself, came the benediction of the first Sabbath. Its significance extends beyond the narrow limits of Judaism to all races, and perhaps to all worlds. It is a law spoken not simply through the lawgiver of a chosen people, but declared in the presence of a finished heaven and earth. The declaration in Genesis furnishes the best commentary on the saying of Jesus: "The Sabbath was made for man." For man, universal humanity, it was given with its benediction.

2. *The Sabbath is a monument of creation, and therefore of universal and permanent obligation.*

The reason of the institution of the Sabbath is one which possesses an unchanging interest and importance to all mankind. The theme of the Creation is not peculiar to Israel, nor is worship of the Creator confined to the children of Abraham. The primary article of every religious creed, and the foundation of all true religion, is faith in one God as the Maker of all things. Against atheism, which denies the existence of a personal God; against materialism, which denies that this visible universe has its roots in the un-

seen ; and against secularism, which denies the need of worship, the Sabbath is therefore an eternal witness. It symbolically commemorates that creative power which spoke all things into being, the wisdom which ordered their adaptations and harmony, and the love which made, as well as pronounced, all "very good." It is set as the perpetual guardian of man against that spiritual infirmity which has everywhere led him to a denial of the God who made him, or to the degradation of that God into a creature made with his own hands.

There may have been ages in the history of the Christian church when this fundamental doctrine of creation has seemed of little consequence, when the belief in a personal Author of the world has been looked upon as a barren truism too absolutely certain to be worth discussion or proof. But those days are past. The wonderful progress of physical science in the last century has led the thoughts of men anew to those old problems of the beginnings of things. And too often has close absorption in "the things that are seen" blinded the eyes of even honest students to the "things that are not seen," and star-eyed science has become mole-eyed by too long working underground. Life is not revealed to the straining eyes that peer into the microscope; spirit escapes

the sharp point of the scalpel; and God cannot be found in the bottom of a crucible. Against this tendency to doubt the spiritual and supernatural, against this infidelity to the doctrine of creation and a personal Creator, the Sabbath is a perpetual protest. We can hardly doubt that were its observance more regarded, and its spiritual meaning more largely dwelt upon, no fool would be found saying either in his heart or on his lips, "There is no God."

It is very evident that this doctrine of creation pertains to all time as well as to all men. Never can scientific thought be indifferent to the origin of things, and never can religion fail to remember that every doctrine is meaningless which does not have as its presupposition a personal Author of all things, infinite in power, intelligence, and beneficence. As fair as to the gaze of the first man the face of nature shines.

"The world's unwithered countenance  
Is bright as on creation's day."

To the widening thought of man, to his enlarged knowledge of the wonders of the world about him, and to his large grasp of the laws and forces that rule it, the marvel of its existence is not less, but more; and whether with curiosity or reverence he tread the paths of his search, they ever lead into a fathomless mystery, a mystery

which only the high miracle of creation can solve. While the reason remains, the law remains. The reason of the Sabbath is to be found in the fact of creation; it is God's one monument set in human history to that great event; and so long as the truth of creation and the knowledge of a Creator have any value to human thought, any authority over the human conscience, or make any appeal to human affections, so long the law and the institution of the Sabbath will abide with lasting instruction and undiminished obligation.

3. *The example of the Creator establishes the moral character of this obligation.*

God "rested the seventh day from all his work which he had made." Such is the record, declared in the beginning, embodied in the Decalogue, and confirmed by the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is a statement not to be easily understood at the first glance. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" Isaiah 40 : 28. If he is never weary, how can we say of him that he rests? Besides, Jesus has said, and with reference to the Sabbath, "My Father worketh hitherto." John 5 : 17. We see no cessation of activity in the works of God. Night and day the ever-moving



wheels of nature revolve, knowing no weariness and finding no rest. With unflagging pace the journeying worlds keep up their eternal march through space. The radiant light speeds onward, marking its footsteps with beauty; the subtile electric fire flashes along its secret ways to do its wondrous work; and life throbs on its deeper diapason of meaning beneath these upper notes of nature; but all these faint not on their unceasing round of work, and never suspend their unwearied activity of untiring, unresting motion. How, then, can God, who thus upholds his creation with an energy that never is remitted, be said to rest?

God is a Spirit, and the only rest which he can know is that supreme repose which only the Spirit can know—in the fulfilment of his purpose and the completeness as well as completion of his work. Just as, in the solemn pauses between the creative days, he pronounced his creatures “very good,” so did he rejoice over the finishing of his work, resting in the perfect satisfaction of an accomplished plan; not to restore his wasted energy, as man rests, but to signify that in the coming of man the creative idea has found its consummation and crown. Such is the rest possible to a purely spiritual nature—the rest of a completed work.

While, therefore, it may be admitted that the world endures only by the continuous exercise of

the energy by which it was first formed, still the appearance of man marked the summit of the ascending thought of creation, considered either as a material or a mental product. All that came before him had reference to him, and all prophesied his coming. When he came he was the answer to all the voices of all the geologic ages before him. The universe was made with reference to man, because man was made with reference to the law of righteousness. In him God produced the full finite expression of himself; man was made "in the image of God." In man culminated the eternal counsel of creation, and therefore did the Creator cease from his work, and spiritually rest in complacent contemplation of a finished world. His is not the unconscious repose of Hindoo mythology, which says, "Brahma sleeps," but the Maker's joy in the perfectness of his work, shared by the morning stars in their songs of gladness, and echoed in the joyful shouting of the sons of God.

In the idea of the Sabbath there is, therefore, contained both a monument to the physical fact of creation and a testimony to its spiritual meaning achieved in man. In keeping the Sabbath, man asserts his own spirituality and the spirituality of God; asserts that he is not related so closely to restless nature as to God, who, being a Spirit,

can rest in his work as well as from his work. Man can cease to observe the Sabbath only when he has ceased to respect the divinity of his own nature and has thoroughly identified himself with the brutish mechanism of nature, which never knows or needs repose. The obligation of the Sabbath has for its measure the dignity of the nature of man; its law rests upon him as son of God and kin of angels; and its duration is consequently as lasting as the life of spirit, as immortal as himself.

There is a still deeper sense in which the example of Deity reveals this obligation. Suppose the question to be asked, How can we know that any precept is moral in its meaning and authority, and not simply a positive and arbitrary command? What better answer could be given to this inquiry than to say that a moral precept must have the ground of its existence in the nature of God? Our highest conception of the moral law is to regard it as the transcript of his nature. This will be true whatever position we take in regard to the vexed questions of the foundation and character of moral obligation. Whatever side we take in these disputes, all must agree that no more perfect vindication of the moral character of a law can be given than to show that it is a rule of the divine conduct; that it has been imposed upon his own activity by that infinite Will

which is the supreme authority both in the physical and moral government of the universe. That law to which the Creator submits his own being must be of absolute binding force upon every creature made in his image. Such is the law of the Sabbath. "God rested the seventh day," and by so doing has given to the law of the Sabbath the highest and strongest sanction possible even to Deity. In no conceivable way could the Almighty so perfectly and with such unchallengeable authority declare not simply his will in a positive institution, but the essentially moral character of the precept, as by revealing his own self-subjection to the rule which he imposes on his creatures. This argument is not weakened but strengthened by the admission already made that God's keeping of a Sabbath is not in every respect like that of man; that he cannot be said to rest in every sense in which man rests. There is thus disclosed the fact that the Sabbath has a spiritual essence, an inward meaning deeper than the outward fact of physical rest, and that beneath the material element of its being it has a moral foundation and life. Its obligation is addressed not to man's physical nature alone, but to man as a spiritual being made in the image of God; it is laid not only on his bodily powers and natural understanding, but upon his moral reason as right,

and upon his conscience as duty. It is therefore bounded by no limits of time, place, or circumstance, but is of universal and perpetual authority.

4. *There is a divine Sabbath, which is the abiding ground of the human institution of the Sabbath.*

The thought has doubtless already arisen in the mind of the reader that these days of creation are not to be taken as literal days of twenty-four hours each, and that by consequence the seventh day of the divine rest is not a natural day marked by the revolution of the earth, and therefore the duty of observing sacredly one day in a week as a Sabbath cannot be based on the ordinance of creation. What if we should find in that very fact a new confirmation of the abiding character of the Sabbatic law?

Indeed, our very conception of God forbids us to bring him under the dominion of a temporal institute. His Sabbath, as an infinite Being, must be one of those "ineffable days" of which St. Augustine speaks. God has done more than give an example to man in entering upon his Sabbath rest. He has placed after the ages of his physical activity of world-making an age of spiritual manifestation; in the midst of the kingdom of nature he places a holy and happy kingdom of souls. This Sabbath of God covers the

life of man on the earth and extends into the eternity of his existence with God hereafter. In Eden man enjoyed with his Maker a perpetual Sabbath. Labor had not yet become a curse; the antagonism between spirit and nature caused by sin had not yet manifested itself. If the weekly Sabbath was kept, it was to commemorate the work which had ended in this blessed harmony of man with God. In the fall man lost the divine Sabbath in its fulness; but to him, thus under the sentence of labor and death, the weekly Sabbath remained, the constant memorial of the former, and the perpetual prophet of its restoration through a Redeemer. It remains as the shadow, gaining with the advancing years more and more of the substance of true rest, and shall remain until man enters again into the heavenly rest of a regained paradise in the restitution of all things. The Sabbath is not a legal but an evangelical institution, the central and only abiding outward sign of all religious belief. It is inseparably connected with the whole history of redemption. Our human Sabbaths are points at which we touch our diviner life, points where still we recognize that eternity of bliss which hovers for ever over our years of sorrow.

Our weekly Sabbath is therefore the manifestation in time of something which is eternal.

Why this eternal fact should have as its temporal embodiment just one day in seven is something which we are no more able to explain than why the immortal spirit of man should have such and such a body. It is the form which God has given it, for he has revealed not indistinctly that the number seven is the signature of creation. As it is everywhere in Scripture the number of perfection and completeness, it is the fit sign of God's finished work and of that perfect condition in which alone the meanings of his creation shall be consummated. The institution of the week is intelligible only as a monument to the creative history in its successive moments; it is the everlasting symbol set in time of the whole process of eternity. The weekly Sabbath, in the only way possible to man in his present state, carries out the divine idea embodied in that rest.

5. *The language used indicates a divine and a human element in the Sabbath.*

“God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.” God can bless the seventh day only by making it a blessing to man. Insensate time cannot feel the benedictions of Deity. Man's blessing is a prayer, but God's blessing is an act. He alone can give the blessing he pronounces. The Sabbath serves man's whole nature, and thus is it to him a blessing. This side of the institution is

wholly directed towards man. It exists for his sake, for the good of his body, mind, and heart. It is a human institution.

But the statement that God sanctified it also implies that the institution has a divine side as well. A day cannot be sanctified or made holy in itself. Time has no moral character. It must be made holy by its uses. Its hours are, therefore, to be consecrated to the highest service, devoted to the worship of God. In no other way can the sanctity of the Sabbath be marked. Its blessing points therefore to man, and its sanctification to God. The Sabbath is a divine-human institution, and this fact confirms the interpretations already given of this ordinance of creation.

The Sabbath is therefore shown to be given in the beginning to all men; to have the lofty sanction of the example of God; to be rooted in the eternal world; to be the witness of the most important truths possible for man to know; to be a blessing to man's nature; to inclose a duty of worship to God. By all these revealings which are given by the institution at its first ordainment we are justified in believing that it has a moral meaning within it, and imposes upon all races and generations of men an unchanging and unrelaxed obligation of dutiful observance.



## CHAPTER II.

## REASON OF THE SABBATH.

“There is nothing arbitrary in the law of God, although still the whole, and every part thereof, is totally dependent on his will: so that ‘Thy will be done’ is the supreme universal law in earth and heaven.”

JOHN WESLEY.

REFERENCE has already been made to a distinction much used in argument on the Sabbath question between moral and positive precepts. It is not unfrequently urged that the Sabbath is only a positive institution; that, consequently, the obligation of its observance is not necessarily perpetual; and that its law may be annulled and abrogated. As this is the very citadel of all anti-Sabbatarian reasoning, it deserves special attention.

“Moral precepts are precepts the reasons of which we can see. Positive precepts are precepts the reasons of which we do not see. Moral duties arise out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command. Positive duties do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command.”\* These definitions of the greatest of English apologists have in them much that is

\* Bishop Butler, “Analogy of Religion.”

valuable; but a very little attention will show them to be quite unsatisfactory. The distinction between a positive and a moral precept is by no means so easy and simple as the above words would indicate. In the eighteenth century, when these words were written, men talked freely of the light of nature and of reason. The present age is beginning to find out the difficulty of establishing any moral law on a rational basis alone. A moral precept must indeed have reasons, but it is neither necessary nor possible for those reasons to be always seen. Self-evidence can hardly be attributed to any single item in the moral law. Take, for example, the case of marriage, with which we have seen the Sabbath to be so closely united. This is connected with and rests upon the moral duty of chastity. Polygamy is universally regarded by Christendom as a violation of this law, yet no one would claim that monogamy is right on the grounds of self-evidence. The history of the world and the experience of mankind would be against such an assertion. Fallen man has adopted monogamic marriage only after painful upward progress through the centuries, and under the tutelage of divine revelation. Take another case. The law for the protection of property, "Thou shalt not steal," cannot be defended on the basis of innate neces-

sity. There have not been wanting those who sincerely have declared property to be itself a robbery of the common heritage of all men. Those "twin pronouns of civilization," "mine" and "thine," have attained their meaning only under divine tutorship.

The truth is that moral principles are neither self-evident nor reasonable to any minds which are not sufficiently developed to receive them. The child and the savage fail to recognize obligations which are instantaneously accepted by the adult and the civilized man. The moral nature of man is as capable of growth as any part of his being. The enlarging consciousness of new and more complex relations to other beings, which can come to man only with experience, must cause to expand within him that moral sense which perceives the reasons of any law. To orders of beings higher than ourselves, and to ourselves when we shall stand in a clearer light than that of the present, and with more perfectly developed faculties, there may be revealed moral reasons for many things which we now regard as merely positive institutions. To such enlarged intelligence the law of the Sabbath may be as absolute and necessary as that of truth or chastity. Thus guarded, the distinction between moral and positive precepts is a good one and worthy of all

regard. Even if it should be proved, which it cannot, that the Sabbath is only a positive ordinance of religion, still it would remain of moral obligation for the reason that a law may be morally binding without having a moral foundation. In the absence of any other reason, obedience is the higher law. Let it only be granted that anything is the will of God, and his creatures are bound to obey. The will of the Lawgiver may not be the final foundation of the law, nor may it afford full satisfaction to the reason, but it is final to the subject, and the obligation imposed by it is truly moral in every sense in which the word can be used.

It must also be remembered that for a finite being every moral law must exist in experience in connection with positive elements. Property, marriage, and government are human institutions; but they are founded on something permanent in the moral nature of things. Perhaps we do not see the real moral essence of any precept; all are realized to us in connection with finite relationships which embody their meaning and express it for us. In every moral requirement there is a permanent and a transient element. So it is with the Sabbath. To keep holy one day in seven has been revealed to us in such circumstances and with such sanctions that we must accept

it as a moral duty. But the manner of observance, and the particular day, with many other features of the institution, belong to the positive side of the ordinance, and, while morally obligatory for the time of their appointment, are capable of change, modification, and repeal. It is the presence of these positive elements which has blinded many good men to the deeper moral meanings of the Sabbath.

While it may not be possible to perfectly vindicate the Sabbath to reason, yet it has a very secure basis in reason, sufficient, with the added authority of revelation, to establish its place in the moral code. As already shown, it comes to us as coeval with the formation of our race; it testifies to facts of universal import and value—the creation of the world, and the spirituality both of the Creator and man, his final work; it is enforced by the example of God, who, by incorporating its essence in his own being, has given the loftiest sanction possible to its divine character and obligation; it is an abiding memorial of a lost Sabbatic state and the continuing promise of the great Sabbath which is to come. Having such a relation to the Creator, to the created world, and to man the created master of the world, we should expect to find in the nature of man, physical and moral, some proofs of the ne-

cessity of a day of rest. If this should be found to be the case, we would have as good a right to claim for these reasons a moral foundation for the law of the Sabbath as we have to claim such a foundation for any other article of the moral law. Not one can be established in any other way.

The given proportion of a seventh may, likewise, be founded on some moral necessity. If, as will be shown, man needs a day of rest from toil, and for religious culture, there must be some definite proportion of time which is, on the whole, better than any other to be devoted to that purpose. It may be granted that it is beyond the power of human reason to fix the exact ratio which would be the best; but that there is such a ratio follows directly when the need of some portion of time for this purpose is considered. Reason teaches the need, and revelation has disclosed the proportion, which has received the ample vindication of experience.

The moral duties of man may be classified into those which he owes to himself, to his fellow-men, and to God. To the proper performance of all of these the Sabbath is vitally related. It is therefore necessary to man's personal, religious, and social life, and under these three heads will it be considered in these pages.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE SABBATH AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

“I feel as if God had, by giving the Sabbath, given fifty-two springs in the year.”

COLERIDGE.

“Six days stern labor shuts the poor  
 From Nature’s careless banquet-hall;  
 The seventh an angel opes the door  
 And, smiling, welcomes all.  
 Six days of toil, poor child of Cain,  
 Thy strength thy master’s slave must be;  
 The seventh thy limbs escape the chain;  
 A God hath made thee free.”

LORD LYTTON.

ON some points connected with the Sabbath there is absolute agreement on all hands. That a day of rest from labor is a most wise and beneficial arrangement for mankind is now an undisputed proposition. Those who deny the moral obligation of the day generally couple their denials with the most energetic protests of their allegiance to the Sabbath as a necessity of the secular life. John Stuart Mill admits that “abstinence on one day of the week, as far as the exigencies of life permit, from the usual daily occupation, though in no respect religiously binding on any except Jews, is a highly beneficial custom;”\*

\* Mill, Essay “On Liberty,” 174, American edition.

he therefore maintains that Sunday laws, within certain limits, are allowable and right. Prof. Tyndall, in his Glasgow lecture against the divine authority of the Sabbath, says, "Most of those who object to the Judaic observance of the Sabbath recognize not only the wisdom but the necessity of some such institution, not on the ground of a divine edict, but of common sense;" and he adds, "There is nothing that I should withstand more strenuously than the conversion of the first day of the week into a common working-day." In another passage of the same address he exhorts: "Let us, then, cherish our Sunday as an institution inherited from our ancestors; but let it be understood that we cherish it because it is in principle reasonable and in practice salutary. Let us uphold it because it commends itself to that 'light of nature' which, despite the catastrophe in Eden, the most famous theologians have mentioned with respect, and not because it is enjoined by the thunders of Sinai."\*

\* Prof. J. Tyndall, "The Sabbath," published in the "Nineteenth Century," Nov., 1880. It is a little startling to hear some divines arguing that the Sabbath is only a positive institution of religion given on Sinai, and not a moral precept revealed in the nature of things, and then to read this assertion of the great physicist that the best reason of the Sabbath is just this light of nature which theologians have declared to give no light whatever on the subject. This newly illustrates the truth that higher than rational grounds must be given for



With this expression of opinion accords the testimony of physiologists, statesmen, philanthropists, and political economists, all coming to the same result from their varied standpoints of view and by their various paths of thought. The Sabbath is acknowledged by all to be a necessity of man's physical and intellectual life. As such it imposes on every man the obligation of due observance.

1. *The Sabbath is an indispensable sanitary provision for the physical man.*

There is a religion of the body as well as of the soul. This sanctity of even physical relationships is taught by Christianity as by no other religion. By the doctrine of the resurrection it has taught the immortality of man—the whole man, and not his spirit only. The New Testament affirms that the body is the “temple of the Holy Ghost;” that our bodies are “members of Christ;” and commands, “Glorify God in your body;” “Present your bodies a living sacrifice.” Rom. 12 : 1; 1 Cor. 6 : 15, 19, 20. There is not in the Scriptures any trace of that old Platonic and later Gnostic contempt of matter which also often exhibits itself in the hyper-spiritualism of to-day, but they frankly acknowledge the life of sense, any moral precept. The phrase, “light of nature,” is wholly deceptive.

insisting upon its consecration to higher ends. Every bodily function is the sacrament of inner spiritual realities, and therefore to be held in reverence. The care of the physical well-being is therefore a moral and religious duty, and imposes moral obligation. To knowingly violate a physical law is sin. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." 1 Cor. 3:17. No man can draw the line between those grosser acknowledged physico-moral transgressions—licentiousness and drunkenness—and any lesser violation of any law of the bodily life. If, then, the Sabbath is shown to be based on any necessity of our nature for physical rest, its moral obligation is as fully shown as when it is seen to be closely connected with the spiritual life, for the very reason that everything which affects one part of the being of man affects the whole man.

The law of rest is as certainly a sanitary law as the law of exercise. Nature teaches this to our bodies in the fact of fatigue and the recurring blessing of sleep. Day and night in constant alternation witness to the constant necessity of alternate labor and repose. More than this, in nearly all disease both the indications of nature and the teachings of medical science prescribe for a time rest as a principal means of cure. Experience shows, however, that the nightly repose of


sleep does not fully restore the physical balance; this can be done only by the frequent interposition of a day of rest. To establish this scientifically is a task of some difficulty, for the reason that all works on Hygiene assume Sunday as a fact, just as they assume sleep, and therefore do not argue the question at all. But the conclusion is, after all, a necessary one that the repose which is so efficient in the restoration of health would be of still higher value in its preservation.

The longest-lived classes in society are those whose occupation is varied between mental and physical toil, as in the learned professions, or those whose means give them the opportunity of leisure. The mortality lists are constantly swelled from among the laboring classes. For this class of facts the statistics are abundant and need not be given. They are the basis on which all the great movements of the last century for shortening the hours of labor have been founded. Dr. W. B. Carpenter, the eminent physiologist, in a letter writes: "Ten hours a day is the fullest amount that ought to be assigned to continued bodily labor; and where there is much mental tension I should say that even this is too much."\* It is to working-men, therefore, that the Sabbath as a rest-day comes most fully freighted with bless-

\* "Woolwich Lectures on the Sabbath," 53.

ing. "He who made the Sabbath loves the poor." It is one of the guardians of labor against the encroachments of capital and the oppression of the taskmaster. It relieves that constant strain of physical effort which is continually undermining the strength of the laboring man.

More direct testimony may be given from medical and other authorities. In 1832 the British House of Commons appointed a select committee on Sunday observance. This committee took a large body of evidence bearing on this subject, all being decisively in favor of the sanitary value of the day of rest. The frequently-quoted testimony of Dr. Farre is a fair specimen of the whole:

 "Although the night apparently balances the circulation, yet it does not sufficiently restore its balance for the attainment of a long life; hence one day in seven, by the bounty of Providence, is thrown in as a day of compensation, to perfect by its repose the animal system." Again he testifies: "It is the day of compensation for the inadequate restorative power of the body under continued labor and excitement. In the bountiful provisions of Providence for the preservation of human life the Sabbatical appointment is not, as it has sometimes been theologically viewed, simply a precept partaking of the nature of a political institution, but it is to be numbered among

the natural duties, if the preservation of life be admitted to be a duty, and its destruction a suicidal act."\* That the animals connected with man need a Sabbath for physical restoration was confirmed before the same committee by proprietors of coach-stands, testifying that their horses could do a large percentage more of work by being allowed a weekly day of rest.† If man were nothing but an animal, the proof would be complete that it is for his interest to observe the Sabbath.

In the letter above mentioned Dr. W. B. Carpenter writes: "My own experience is very strong as to the importance of a complete rest and change of thought once a week."

The celebrated Boerhaave, than whose no more brilliant record fills the annals of medical history, testified to the need of a holy day of rest, and ascribed his own physical vigor to this as well as his daily religious exercises.

The late Prof. Miller, of Edinburgh, asserts that the more the physiologist advances in the exact knowledge of his science, the more he will be convinced that the physiology of the Sabbath, as contained by manifest implication in God's revealed Word, is not only true, but imbedded

\* "Report of Commons' Committee," 116.

† Ibid. 126, 127, 130.

therein, and embodied in corresponding enactments alike in wisdom and mercy. "The night is the rest and the Sabbath of the day; *the Sabbath is the rest and Sabbath of the week.*"

In 1853, 641 physicians, among whom was Dr. J. B. Farre, whose testimony has been given, petitioned Parliament against the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sundays, urging, among other things: "Your petitioners, from their acquaintance with the laws that regulate the human economy, are convinced that the seventh day of rest, instituted by God and coeval with the existence of man, is essential to the bodily health and mental vigor of men in every station of life."\* In this connection it may be noted that the petitioners on this occasion, who numbered nearly two hundred thousand names, mostly of working-men, opposed the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sunday by more than six to one. In our own country medical opinion has been quite as decidedly in favor of the sanitary value of the day of rest.

Besides the direct method of rest, there are indirect ways in which the Sabbath exercises a beneficial influence on the health of the people. In that religion of the body which we call Hygiene there is no more important article than cleanliness. It is among the first of physical vir-

\* "Association Medical Journal," June, 1853.

tues. John Wesley, indeed, would seem to have placed it on the very boundary of even spiritual excellence when he said, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Sunday is a day of clean clothing, and naturally tends, on one day of the week at least, to inspire the desire for neatness of apparel and cleanliness of person. It is only the highest civilization that has achieved in the higher ranks of society the daily tub. It is to be feared that the more common weekly bath would be in danger of disappearing should the day of rest become an ordinary day. A Sabbath-keeping and a church-going people are far more apt to be a cleanly people than those who neglect such observances. Any one who is familiar with the personal habits of individuals may easily verify this statement. That the Sabbath generally means a weekly ablution and change of apparel is not the least of its advantages in a sanitary point of view.

But health depends on moral as well as physical causes. Happiness means health. The Sabbath, truly used, is a day of joy; it is a real festival, and directly tends to create those elevated frames of mind which are the surest undergirding support of the bodily powers. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," said Nehemiah, one of the great Sabbatic reformers of Israel; and our

experience proves that the cheerful disposition and the holy joy of the true Christian are among the best preventives of disease and the most efficient remedies in sickness. Therefore the 641 physicians whose petition is quoted above base that petition on the "close connection between moral and physical disease."

While more exact observation and more definite experiment are still to be desired on this subject, it cannot be, and, indeed, is not, doubted by any intelligent person that the weekly day of rest is a sanitary provision of the highest value, and that its beneficent effects upon the physical being of man are beyond all statistical estimate.

2. *The Sabbath is needed by the intellectual life.*

"In the world there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind."\* Man is a thinking animal, and it is in thought that his true earthly greatness is to be found. Valuable and important to him as is his physical nature, its worth lies in the fact that it is the instrument of expression of that disguised royalty of thought which it incloses. Matter is only the tongue of spirit; the sound body is but the fitting casket for the sound mind. It needs but little argument to show that man's intellectual life requires the

\* "Phavorinus," quoted by J. Pico Mirandola.



Sabbath for its fullest development and highest well-being.

The mind is largely dependent on the body. As we come to know more of the physical organism, the more apparent is it that mental operations are closely connected with physical states; that they are coincident with the formation and dissolution of brain cells; that thought and feeling are closely intertwined with the growth, life, and decay of nervous tissue. In all this there is no necessary implication of materialism. It is sufficient to know that this body is the soul's means of development, through its outer gateways of sense and inner coördinations of forces and feelings. Every argument which shows the Sabbath to be a benefit to the body of man shows it to be also a need of his intellect. Indeed, it is that part of the organism with which mind is most closely connected, the nervous system, which most loudly calls for and most quickly responds to the blessing of rest. Nutrition and respiration may, apparently, go on without showing the effects of incessant toil; but the strain on the nervous system is at once felt. The first result of Sabbathless toil is the brutalization of man which reveals the fact that the light of intellect has been put out. The body is no longer a fitting habitation for the royal guest within it, but becomes a

prison-house instead, in which is confined the de-throned majesty of mind.

The Sabbath helps, also, the intellectual life of the hand-laborer as well as the brain-worker. It furnishes the opportunity of thought to men whose whole lives would otherwise be spent in the treadmill of material toil. Without it they would have neither the motive nor the opportunity for mental improvement. This use is not hindered but helped by the fact that it is the day of religious worship. Perhaps there is no method by which the man who has little time for self-culture can so well gain widened views of life and receive intellectual stimulus as by those ministrations offered him by the church. Whether or not he is a believer, the contact with religious truth is a means of education not to be despised. One day in a week given to the mere study of books could not so fully acquaint any man with the universal aspects of human thought as an hour or two of attention to that system of truth which touches human life and culture at every point. It is hard to see how the laborer could be anything but a machine without the Sabbath. It is absolutely essential to the proper mental development of mankind.

3. *The Sabbath is not inconsistent with personal liberty.*

Is the Christian Sabbath inimical to personal liberty, and will its observance interfere with the proper development of individualism? It is not uncommon to hear this question answered in the affirmative. If the claim could be made out, it would press with overwhelming weight against the obligation of Sabbath observance: for liberty is among the highest blessings; it is the condition of the proper development of every power and faculty of man; without it the highest forms of character can hardly be said to exist at all. If it can be shown that the Sabbath places any restraint on the full growth of any faculty or power of man, that it hinders the free blossoming and fruitage of any germs within his nature, then by so much must it be condemned, and all further arguments and labored proofs in its favor are shown to be futile.

It is an easy task to show that all such opposition to the Sabbath or to Sabbath legislation is based on essentially false conceptions of the nature of liberty. When the moral obligation of the Sabbath is established, all is established; and every specious claim of a liberty that can transcend its claims falls to the ground. There is no human freedom except within the boundaries of the moral law. The highest possibilities of human achievement, the sublimest heights to which

the soul can attain, and the most glorious manifestations of character and life must be realized beneath the all-inclosing skies of duty, or not at all. All true freedom to the soul is within the claims of moral obligation; outside there is nothing but bondage. Under the law of its being, in obedience thereto, and there alone, has the spirit of man its true life, and therefore true liberty. The Sabbath, being of moral obligation, is for that very reason not a hindrance but a help to man, in consummating his true development of character and in attaining his true destiny. It is thoroughly consistent with human freedom. The great Emancipator of human souls, Jesus Christ, has declared this unmistakably in saying that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Because his physical and mental powers cannot endure the strain of existence without its repose; because his moral being, in which his true greatness lies, will be surely merged in animalism and enslaved by sin and sense without its release into the higher atmosphere of religious feeling, therefore man is not to regard the Sabbath as a crushing form to which he must adjust himself, but as a holy gift with infinite adjustments to all the needs of his nature. Its obligation, therefore, imposes no bondage; but its observance is the road to the highest and di-

vinest liberty that any soul can know. A further answer to the objection can be found in the fair application of the law of reciprocity. Even if liberty is interpreted into license, no man can deny the right of observing the day to those who wish to do so. But that the most may be free to enjoy its hours it is necessary that all give it some respect. The freedom of worship to some implies the duty of rest to all. Advocates of so-called "personal liberty" too often forget that the license of action they claim would involve the grossest infringement of the sacred rights of others. It is this feature of the Sabbath question which justifies the enforcement of a day of rest and worship by human government. It is a simple protection of that larger portion of the community who worship God and recognize the duty of obeying his laws in their right so to do. Experience has shown that there is great danger of encroachment on the rights of others in this respect. The Sunday laws are in the direction of true liberty and can never be opposed to it. It is clearly to be seen that the abolition of such laws would make every day a day of public business, and would therefore practically deprive every conscientious Christian of the power of holding office. When we place the shameless claims and sophistical arguments of these would-be defenders

of the sacred rights of man in the white light of duty and reason, their native deformity and viciousness become fully apparent.

Upon the larger class of the community, the people who work with their hands, the loss of the Sabbath would come as an act of tyranny. The truth of this will appear not only from economic considerations, to be noted in the next chapter, but from the fact that no increased return would follow the increase of work. In the "Commons' Report," quoted above, it is stated, "The workmen are aware, and the masters in many trades admit the fact, that were Sunday labor to cease, it would occasion no diminution of the weekly wages."\* And John Stuart Mill, on the same point, says: "The operatives are perfectly right in thinking that if all worked on Sunday, seven days' work would have to be given for six days' wages."†

The abolition of the Sabbath means, therefore, the sheer robbery of one day's work in every week from the laboring men, who lose their rest and gain nothing instead of it. It follows from this, although the reasoning cannot be given in detail, that there could not be any profit at all in any kind of Sunday labor pursued by all. To

\* "Report on the Sabbath," 8.

† Essay "On Liberty," 155.

strike the day of rest from the week would be an oppressive measure towards every class of workers, whether with hands or brain. So much for the claim that personal liberty is infringed by the Sabbath.

4. *One day in seven is the best proportion for rest.*

The divine wisdom has been manifested not only in the proven necessity of a day of rest, but in the proportion of time required. It may not be capable of exact demonstration that precisely one day in seven is the best ratio that could be chosen. But there must be some proportion that is better than any other for universal observance, and neither experience nor philosophy has been able to suggest anything better than one day in seven. Consequently, many careful observers have not hesitated to assert that a weekly Sabbath is beyond doubt the best measure to be applied. What is most surprising is that these testimonies come most positively from writers who cannot be accused of any extreme prejudices in favor of religious institutions. Two such testimonies will be given.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, in his "Briefe an eine Freundin," says:

"I completely agree with you that the institution of fixed days of rest, even if it had no connection with religious observance, is a most

pleasing and truly refreshing idea to every one who has a humane mind towards all classes of society. The selection of the seventh day is certainly the wisest that could have been made. Although it may seem, and to some extent may be, optional to shorten or lengthen labor one day, I am convinced that six days is the just and true measure suitable to men in regard to their physical powers and perseverance in a monotonous employment. There is likewise something humane in this, that the beasts that aid man in his labor share in the rest. To lengthen the time of returning rest beyond measure would be as inhuman as foolish. I have had an example of this in my own experience. ✓ When I spent several years in Paris in the time of the Revolution, I saw this institution, despite its divine origin, superseded by the dry and wooden decimal system. Only the tenth day was what we call Sunday, and all customary work continued for nine long days. This being evidently too long, Sunday was kept by several as far as the police laws would permit it, and thus again too much idleness was the result. Thus we are always between two extremes so far as we remove from the safe and regulated middle path."

The other passage is from an argument in favor of Sunday observance from a purely secular



standpoint, by Proudhon, the French socialist, and is as follows:

“What statistician could have found out for the first time that ordinarily the period of work ought to bear to the period of rest the exact proportion of six to one? Therefore Moses, who had to arrange for a nation the labors and days, rests and festivals, works of the body and exercises of the soul, the laws of hygiene and morals, politic economy and individual subsistence, took refuge in a science of numbers, in a transcendental harmony which took in all space, time, duration, motion, spirits, bodies, the holy and the profane. The certainty of the science is proved by the result. Decrease the week by only one day, and the labor is insufficient for the repose; increase it by the same amount, and it is too much. Fix every three days and a half a half-day of relaxation, and you increase by dividing the day the loss of time; and by breaking the natural unity of the day the numerical balance of things is broken. If you grant, on the other hand, forty-eight hours of rest after twelve consecutive days of work, you kill the man with inertia after having exhausted him with fatigue.”\*

While the decree of infinite Wisdom has no need of human confirmation, such testimonies as

\* Proudhon, “De la Célébration du Dimanche,” 67.

these have their value. That God's revelation in his Book is consonant with his revelation in nature, sets upon the former anew the seal of divine authority. Just the parallelism between the Bible and nature which we would expect to find is supplied by these testimonies. By themselves these natural reasons, perhaps, could not establish a moral duty; but when they are connected with a positive command of God they help to raise it to the rank of a moral precept.

If this question were to be decided by authority merely, who could impeach the testimony of such reformers as Knox and Wesley, such statesmen as Burke and Lincoln, such soldiers as Cromwell and Washington, such jurists as Sir Matthew Hale and John Marshall, such lawyers as Blackstone and Webster, such divines as Howe and Edwards, such philosophers as Bacon and Locke, such savants as Newton and Agassiz, such philanthropists as Howard and Wilberforce, such physicians as Carpenter and Dr. John Brown, such essayists as Addison and John Foster, such historians as Macaulay and Hallam, such poets as Herbert, Cowper, and even Byron, such political economists as Adam Smith and Stuart Mill, such literary men as Walter Scott and Samuel Johnson, such scholars as Sir Wm. Jones and Chevalier Bunsen? all of whom, from their varied stand-

points, have declared that a day of rest is of the highest value to mankind, that it is an inestimable boon to be guarded and preserved. Such unanimity of opinion from such varying sources can be accounted for only on the assumption that human nature everywhere feels the need of a Sabbath, that the whole being of man requires its restoring power both for body and mind.

This chapter may be properly concluded by a quotation of singular power of language, written by a journeyman printer of Scotland, a prize essay on the Sabbath :

“Yoke-fellow ! think how the abstraction of the Sabbath would hopelessly enslave the working classes with which we are identified. Think of labor going on in one monotonous and eternal cycle, limbs for ever on the rack, muscles for ever straining, the brow for ever sweating, the feet for ever plodding, the brain for ever throbbing, the shoulders for ever drooping, the loins for ever aching, and restless mind for ever scheming.

“Think of the beauty it would efface, the merry-heartedness it would extinguish, of the giant strength it would tame, of the resources of nature it would crush, of the sickness it would breed, of the projects it would wreck, of the groans it would extort, of the lives it would immolate, and of the cheerless graves it would prematurely

dig. See them toiling and moiling, sweating and fretting, grinding and hewing, weaving and spinning, strewing and gathering, mowing and reaping, razing and building, digging and planting, striving and struggling—in the garden and in the field, in the granary and in the barn, in the factory and in the mill, in the warehouse and in the shop, on the mountain and in the ditch, on the roadside and in the wood, in the city and in the country, on the sea and on the shore, in the day of brightness and of gloom. What a picture would the world present if we had no Sabbath !”\*

\* John Quinton, “Temporal Advantage of the Sabbath to the Laboring Classes.” This essay took the first of three prizes. Of the three essays published there have probably been nearly a million copies circulated.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE SABBATH AND SOCIETY.

“The keeping of one day in seven holy, as a time of relaxation and refreshment as well as public worship, is of inestimable benefit to a State considered merely as a civil institution.”

BLACKSTONE.

As are the motions of the heavenly bodies, so is the life of man under the control of a centrifugal and a centripetal force. The first is the tendency to individualism, the assertion of his own personality; the latter is the social force which tends to merge his unit in the mass of humanity. One strives to maintain his life in its own proper orbit; the other holds him in harmony with the whole universe of moral beings, and conditions his action by their existence. Between the sweep of these two mighty forces, the sway of self-will and the claims of society, man's life, like a pendulum, swings backward and forward. Human history could be written in conformity with this formula, and all its phenomena might be shown to be but the temporary predominance of one or the other of these tendencies. Authority and freedom, empire and the individual, such are the

constant antagonisms to bring about whose harmony the world exists.

Since man is a being with social relations, and since his life is largely modified by those relations, we cannot fully estimate the value of the Sabbath until we have measured its effect upon those organized forms of human life, the community and the nation. And it needs only the most superficial observation to come to the same conclusion with perhaps the most profound student of the conditions of social and national prosperity who ever lived, who said: "The Sabbath as a political institution is of inestimable value, independently of its claims to divine authority."\*

The germ of a social organization is the family. Such is the testimony of our personal consciousness, as well as of all research into the origin of municipal institutions. The first knowledge we possess of social relationships and social order is that which came to us from the home when we first felt the loving limitations of paternal and fraternal law. The home is the first and holiest temple of religion; the family is the first and best form of government; the father is its ministering priest and its only king by divine

\* Adam Smith, quoted in Chambers' "Life of Sir John Sinclair."

right. No higher test can be applied to any civilization than this: Is its prosperity built upon and guarded by holy and happy homes? It has been well said that "the humble hearth-stone is the corner-stone of the temple and the foundation-stone of the city." Happy is the man whose childhood was shaped by its sacred influences and lessons, whose manhood knows its mighty inspirations, and whose old age shall be spent in its precious asylum of tender companionship and affection! Happy the land whose glory and strength is built upon the closely linked confederacy of pious domestic institutions!

Without the Sabbath, it is not too much to say that the home in its highest and best form cannot exist; for religion is the only guardian of the sanctity of the family relation, and without the day of religion that relation will become but a ruined temple, whose crumbling remains tell only of a bygone glory. It certainly is a suggestive fact that we know of but two primitive institutions, marriage and the Sabbath. They were granted, a twin benediction, to man in the paradise of his infancy; they are linked together indissolubly in sacredness and mutual relationship; they are the ever-present joys rescued from a lost Eden, and the constant promise of a regained paradise and an everlasting rest. Marriage is

the foundation of the home, and the Sabbath is its surest guardian and strongest security.

It is a fact of the weightiest import that the Sabbath and the family go up and down together, as witnessed by the testimony of facts. European writers have vied with each other in praising the domestic virtues of Great Britain and the United States. Madame De Staël writes: "Nowhere can be seen such faithful protection on one side, and such tender and pious devotedness on the other, as in married life in England." De Tocqueville, in his "Democracy in America," gives similar testimony as to the American family. But these are the very nations noted above all others for firmness of moral fibre. Who shall say how much the Sabbath has had to do in building up that vertebrate morality which reveals itself in happy homes and in inspiring the conquering Anglo-Saxon race of to-day, which has girded the world with empire, with its intense energy of character?

It is not less suggestive that the decline of Sabbath observance has always been accompanied by a decline in the sacredness in which the marriage relation is held. The nations of southern Europe furnish a constant example and warning. The shocking prevalence of infanticide and illegitimacy among those people furnishes a burn-



ing commentary on our text. In France, during the Revolution, the substitution of the tenth for the seventh day was accompanied by a divorce law, under whose provisions within three months there was recorded one-divorce for every three marriages in Paris alone. Even in England and America these latter days of growing Sabbath desecration have been attended with an increase of crimes against the family. The Sunday opening of concert-halls, public-houses, and theatres in our cities, the growing popularity of Sunday resort to watering-places and picnic gardens, and the systematic violation of the sacred day by railway and steamship companies, have been followed in equal pace with crowded dockets in the divorce courts and growth of the social evil.

Now this coincidence between a holy day and a holy home cannot be entirely accidental. It is too uniform and persistent to be so regarded. One reason, doubtless, is that both alike are grounded in the moral life of the individual, and so rise and fall together with the flow and ebb of that life. But that there is, as well, a rational connection between the two is evident from two or three considerations. First, whatever benefits the individual must benefit the family. If each member of the home is physically and religiously

profited by the Sabbath, the aggregate effect must be for the welfare of the entire household. Secondly, a day of religion is necessary to the existence of religion, and without religion the family must perish. The love which builds up a Christian home is something different from the savage affection of the animal. It is based upon spiritual facts and recognizes religious obligations. Religion must inspire its devotion as well as teach its duties; its sacred flame must be lighted at the altars of God. Consequently there is not a message which the Sabbath brings, not a thought to which its proper use gives birth, not a feeling which it cherishes, but helps in the sanctification of the home life and in purifying the sources of domestic virtue. Thirdly, the Sabbath gives direct opportunity for the cultivation of family relationships. Through the work-days of the week the members of a household are separated from each other by the necessities of toil. The day of rest regathers them at the hearth-stone, reknits the half-severed ties of fellowship, and unseals the fountains of common sympathy and affection. It furnishes larger opportunity for the religious instruction of children. Without it the family could hardly realize its unity in the fullest extent, and the roof-tree, ceasing to be love's sanctuary, would become but the lodging-house of individu-

als ignorant of the highest happiness and destitute of the most salutary influence that personal or national life can know. With the Sabbath the home must stand or fall. For the defence of the fireside its sacred hours of worship and rest must be kept inviolate.

The influence of the Sabbath on society is felt, however, not only through its effects on the family, but directly. So conservative a writer as Sir William Blackstone has said: "Besides the notorious indecency and scandal of permitting any secular business to be publicly transacted on that day in a country professing Christianity, and the corruption of morals which usually follows its profanation, the keeping of one day in seven holy, as a time of relaxation and refreshment as well as public worship, is of inestimable benefit to a State, considered merely as a civil institution. It harmonizes, by the help of conversation and society, the manners of the lower classes, which would otherwise degenerate into a sordid poverty and savage selfishness of spirit; it enables the industrious workman to resume his occupation in the ensuing week with health and cheerfulness; it impresses on the minds of the people that sense of duty to God so necessary to make them good citizens, but which yet would be worn out and effaced by an unremitting con-

tinuance of labor without any stated time of recalling them to the worship of their Maker."\*

The great expositor of the English law has here stated almost the whole case. The Sabbath is vital to the material prosperity, the general intelligence, and the morals and manners of a nation. Under these heads its public benefits can properly be considered.

I. *The economic welfare of the State is closely connected with the Sabbatic institution and its proper observance.*

Wealth is a result of the action of man on nature; or, to define more narrowly, is the effect of such a union of human labor with the natural resources of the earth as to transform them into commodities useful to man. It is evident that the human factor is not the least important. Whatever therefore affects the health, intelligence, and morals of a people, affects immediately and directly the production of wealth. The beneficial influence of the Sabbath in these respects has elsewhere been shown, and the conclusion follows that the financial prosperity of the State is furthered by the observance of a day of rest. There can be no doubt that the religious use of fifty-two days in the year directly enhances

\* Blackstone, "Commentaries on the Laws of England." Book IV. chap. 63.

the work of the remaining days to a much greater amount than the market value of the time thus apparently lost. Productive labor depends on conditions of health, intelligence, and character which are directly connected with the institution of the Sabbath.

Unremitting toil robs labor of the bounding pulse of physical vitality and the spring of generous moral impulse, which are among the highest elements in productive industry; and thus is the State robbed of one of the foundation-stones of its prosperity.

Lord Macaulay, on the lowest ground indeed, but not less positively, has defended this position. In his speech on the Ten Hours Bill he says:

“The natural difference between Campania and Spitzbergen is trifling when compared with the difference between a country inhabited by men full of mental and bodily vigor and a country inhabited by men sunk in bodily and mental decrepitude. Therefore it is that we are not poorer but richer because we have through many ages rested from our labor one day in seven. *That day is not lost.* While industry is suspended, while the plough lies in the furrow, while the exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on quite as important to the wealth of nations as any process which

is performed on more busy days. Man, the machine of machines, the machine compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and Arkwrights are worthless, is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labors on the Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, and with renewed corporal vigor. If the Sunday had not been observed as a day of rest, but the axe, the spade, the anvil, and the loom had been at work every day during the past three centuries, I have no doubt that we should have been at this moment a poorer people and a less civilized people than we are."

It is not, however, in its effects on man's bodily powers alone that the beneficial influence of the Sabbath is manifested. There are moral elements entering into all industrial effort, not easily measured by statistics, but easily appreciable in fact. Just as the patriot is a better soldier than the mercenary, so is the craftsman who has a cultivated emotional and moral nature superior to the merely mechanical worker whose exertions in man's behalf are on the same level with those of the horse or the ox. And this will show itself not only in the amount of work done, but in its quality as well. David Hume, who certainly was not a slave to spiritual abstractions, writes: "We cannot reasonably expect that a piece of woollen

cloth will be brought to perfection in a nation which is ignorant of astronomy or *where ethics are neglected.*"\* Even the most exact student of political economy must admit the supreme importance of these unseen factors in the material prosperity of nations.

Work without cessation will affect the character of products not only by the imperfect performance caused by flagging strength, but by destroying the moral tone of the laborer and crushing the energy of his spirits. Let the wheels of toil grind on without rest, and nothing can result but stupefaction of the finest qualities in the human factor of wealth. Besides, it may be affirmed that the existence of such an active moral and intellectual life among working men as can be secured only by a well-guarded Sabbath is a direct stimulus to inventive genius, and that to this we owe many of those wonderful applications of the physical forces and mechanical powers which have cheapened the cost of living to the millions, increased the comfort of mankind, and added to the wealth of communities and States.

The remark of Hume, quoted above, suggests a still deeper and broader range of inferences than these. All physical civilization rests on moral causes. Without the stimulus of his mental and

\* Hume's Essays, "On Luxury."

spiritual energies man would soon cease to interest himself in either trade or manufacture. The multiplication of human wants, which alone inspires the effort to supply them, keeps even step with the moral development of man. Those finer sensibilities which demand and consume the higher products of toil are but a manifestation of a larger feeling of human dignity, a higher sense in man of the essential worth of his being. Making and buying and selling are only new assertions of the spirituality of man. The savage has few wants; the civilized man has many, and they have followed in the train of more largely developed mental and moral powers. Wealth, one of the symbols of man's greatness, may indeed be mistaken for the reality. What is but an accident of the spiritual progress of humanity may be largely confounded with the substance. But the truth remains that the growing demands of man which directly control all his industrial life have their origin in his highest nature as a spiritual and supernatural being. Whatever raises a community in the moral scale will increase in that community a demand for the products of human toil, and will thus directly stimulate production. A nation or community which knows the moral uplifting of the Sabbath will by so much be a larger consumer of the results of productive toil,



and thus aid in bringing about that reciprocal action of supply and demand which is the swinging pendulum controlling the mechanism of the economic system. The Sabbath assists in the creation of wealth by its effect both on the producer and on the consumer.

While the above argument, resting on economic principles which are undisputed, has all the force of a demonstration, the case will not be weakened by bringing the testimony of facts to the support of theory. In one of the royal manufactories of Great Britain it was found "that the workmen who obtained government consent to abstain from working on Sunday executed in a few months even more work than the others."\*

Similar experiments have been made in the public service of other nations, as well as by private parties, and with invariably the same result. That Great Britain and the United States have made the most rapid increase in material prosperity is coincident with the fact that they are marked among nations as most strict in their religious observance of the Sabbath. The fact is placed in the most striking light when the United States are contrasted with the Spanish republics of America. Fairly equal in their start and in the physical resources of climate and soil, the Sab-

\* "Life of Wilberforce," I. 275.

bath-keeping republic is the wonder of the world, while the others are to-day hardly above the grade of semi-barbarism. Ireland is naturally a richer country than Scotland. They are inhabited by branches of the same race. In the matter of land-tenure there are even fewer peasant proprietors in Scotland than in Ireland. Nowhere in the world, however, has the institution of the Sabbath taken so deep a root as among the Scotch people. What is the result? In spite of a vicious system of land-tenure, an inhospitable climate, and a barren soil, the Scottish people must be ranked among the most enlightened and happy communities in the world, while the natives of the fertile Green Isle, knowing only the popish holiday of Sunday without its Sabbath rest, are the objects of the world's pity in their poverty, wretchedness, and degradation. In Ireland itself the distinction is deeply marked between the steady business habits and commercial activity of Sabbath-keeping Ulster and the recklessness, destitution, and business stagnation of the south and west of the island. Similar contrasts, not less striking, can be drawn between the condition of the French portions of Canada and the Protestant settlements, and between the Protestant and Roman-catholic cantons of Switzerland. It would be possible to go farther and show that in any community those classes that observe

the Sabbath are most prosperous, that they are better fed and clothed than others; that Sabbath-breaking neighborhoods are the abode of pauperism and vice; and that in every way social and national wealth everywhere follows that social and national religious life which demands the Sabbath for its proper nurture and maintenance.

2. *The Sabbath is vitally related to good citizenship.*

Wealth, although it is an important element in human happiness, is not the only nor the chief element of a nation's greatness. When the young colonies of America struggled to release themselves from British dominion, with hungry, bare-footed soldiers and an empty treasury, the United States was not the less a great nation, even then, because of poverty. The nation was rich and strong in the manly strength of free men and in the loyal love of patriotic hearts. Here is the true grandeur of any people, that its glory is founded in the exalted personal character of its citizens; these are its walls of strength, which, like those of Sparta, are not of brick or stone, but of the firmer structure of an approved manhood. Towards the production of such a character no means can be more essential than those institutions of religion which depend upon the observance of the Sabbath. Without this witness to

the spirituality of man and to his moral dignity it is certain that the highest excellence of personal and national life cannot be attained.

A very vigorous American orator has said: "Safe popular freedom consists of four things, and cannot be compounded of any three out of the four: the diffusion of liberty, the diffusion of intelligence, the diffusion of property, and the diffusion of conscientiousness. In the latter work the church is the chief agent; and her most potent instrumentality we call the Sabbath." He goes on to remark, "I am no fanatic, I hope, as to Sunday; but I look abroad over the map of popular freedom in the world, and it does not seem to me accidental that Scotland, England, and the United States, the countries which best observe Sunday, constitute almost the entire map of safe popular government."\* "Social sanity," a phrase used by the same speaker, pretty nearly expresses the total effect of Sabbath observance upon the whole community. Where it is neglected we surely find social insanity, manifesting itself in constant revolution, outbreaks, and restlessness. Ordered liberty needs the Sabbath. Without it the State is the continual prey of either the tyrant or the demagogue, is for ever falling into one of the extremes, despotism or anarchy.

\* Joseph Cook, "Biology." Prelude to Lecture VIII.

Real civil liberty depends upon the moral condition of the citizens.

“He is the free man whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves besides.”

A people who are in the bondage of vices, passions, or errors cannot be disenthralled by a simple decree of State. Moral serfdom will everywhere produce civil vassalage. The weekly day of rest, which releases man from the material bonds of toil and gives him the freedom of a larger life, is therefore one of the very best adapted means to fit the citizen for prizing, enjoying, and maintaining political freedom. When the workman knows no weekly deliverance from his tasks he has already become a slave; to realize his freedom he needs an occasional day in which he is delivered from the undue exactions of labor and from the sense of dependence upon his employer. And this deliverance is best provided in a day of religion, with its lofty inspirations and its enlarging sense of the dignity and possibilities of the soul. Such a day is, as well, a memorial to the rich and strong of their duty to the poor and weak. Thus both ruler and ruled, employers and employed, are blessed by its presence.

It is not surprising that despotic rulers have attempted to turn the Sabbath from a day of worship into a day of amusement, in order to divert

the people from that serious thought which would wake within them the might of manhood. Hallam is not the only historian who has noticed this tendency of tyrants. "A holiday Sabbath is the ally of despotism." Such rulers as Charles II. of England have practised with some success this device. Yet the policy is a short-sighted one for the reason that a Sabbathless people, while incapable of freedom, are equally unfit for government of any kind. In the political earthquakes of the latter half of the eighteenth century and the former half of the nineteenth the Roman-catholic countries of Europe suffered most and the Protestant nations least, and almost in proportion to the respect shown to the Sabbatic institutions among them. But Great Britain, first in its religious regard of the Lord's day, was quite unshaken amid the convulsions which made the Continent tremble. The close connection of the Sabbath with social order and national tranquillity is further exemplified by the fact that, at this very time, nearly every European power is burdened by expensive military establishments and large standing armies, while England and the United States, most prosperous of all, have the smallest standing armies, and those almost wholly quartered in the distant colonies and on the frontiers of civilization. The peace that Sunday brings is

the best bulwark of national peace. These facts have forcibly impressed acute Continental observers and such authorities as Chevalier Bunsen,\* the German historian, and Montalembert,† the French statesman, that the secret of England's prosperity is to be found in the Sabbath rest and its influence and teachings.

Military as well as civic virtues thrive under the fostering care of the day of rest. On the coming of the hard occasion when the nation needs defence against her foes, the influence of religious culture on the people may be clearly felt and seen. Ever since the days of the Maccabees, when a heroic people fought for a Sabbath, waging, perhaps, the first war for conscience' sake the world has known, down to the American civil war, armies have depended for victory not merely on numbers, but on that prowess which comes from faith in the Lord of Hosts and is nurtured by his institutions of worship and rest. Perhaps never before or since did so invincible a band of soldiers go forth to war as Cromwell's God-fearing and Sabbath-keeping "Ironclads." And the glory of such soldiers appears not only in their courage on the field of battle, but in the ease

\* Bunsen, "Hippolytus and his Age," II. 16-18.

† "Report on Sunday Observance to the French Parliament," 1850.

with which they go back to the common labor of life. Macaulay says of Cromwell's troops: "In a few months there remained no trace indicating that the most formidable army in the world had just been absorbed into the community."\* On a larger scale, after the American Rebellion, more than a million citizen-soldiers of North and South quietly disbanded, and, without social disturbance or marked increase of crime, went back to their homes and the vocations of peace. Such self-restraint and moral balance as this is one of the marked effects of an honored Sabbath. Such examples are unknown in nations destitute of its full observance.

Intelligence, morality, religion, these are some of the requisites of good citizenship. These, as is elsewhere proved, are directly connected with a holy Sabbath. Upon it, then, directly rests the perpetuity of nations. To attempt the conduct of national life without it would be to try the most fearful experiment ever made in human history. God dishonored, his Book rejected, his Sabbaths desecrated—these things would be the sure prelude to the same terrible fate that has befallen the godless civilizations of the past. Judæa, Greece, and Rome warn us to-day.

\* "History of England." Vol. I.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE SABBATH AND RELIGION.

“There can be no religion without worship, and no worship without Sunday.”

MONTALEMBERT.

“It is not too much to say that without the Sunday the church of Christ could not as a visible society exist on the earth.”

MACLEOD.

THE life of man is threefold—the life of sense, of thought, and of faith. By his body man is related to nature, by his soul to created intelligences, and by his spirit to God and spiritual things. And these three things together make up man. Just so far as he lacks either of these forms of consciousness his being is incomplete. But that life of the spiritual nature which we call religion is the crown and glory of all life. For its sake the body and mind of man exist, and to it all things are ministrant. It is in the nurture of this life in man that the Sabbath reveals its highest uses and discloses its inner meaning.

The two preceding chapters have given what may be called the secular argument for a day of rest. If man's whole existence were to be spent on the plains of mortality; if there never came to his being the stir and sweep of those strong pin-

ions of spiritual aspiration which bear him towards the everlasting hills, even then the Sabbath would come with a weekly blessing and refreshment to weary body and mind. Yet it may be doubted whether an institution based on so weak a foundation as this could continue to exist. Indeed, nothing high or noble can have any permanent life save as it is derived from spiritual inspirations. The physical and the intellectual life can vindicate themselves only by showing themselves the matrix in which the divine life is developed. It is not too much to say that the whole value of life in any worthy human sense is derived from religion. It is therefore the strongest claim that can be made in behalf of the Sabbath when it is shown that it is supremely not the day of rest alone, but the day of religion, and that to any worthy development of the religious life it is absolutely indispensable.

In the statement of the secular argument which has been given, reference has been constantly made to this higher point of view, and it is only from this mount of vision that those lower considerations can thoroughly vindicate themselves to reason. Sanitary and economic considerations can impose no moral obligation, unless we look upon man and human society as having eternal relations to God and an unchanging law

of righteousness. There is a difference between utility and duty. The ideas involved in them are as different as the words themselves. The desire for health, wealth, and knowledge does not become a moral motive until these things are regarded not as temporal blessings alone, but as the ministers of spiritual good. The full force of the secular argument depends therefore on this, that we inseparably connect the Sabbath with religion. Figures, statistics, scientific experiment, and observation are well enough in their way, but they become luminous in their highest beauty only when there shines in them that "light that never was on land or sea." Yet the secular ground of the Sabbath must not be slighted. If the argument is on a low plane, yet for that very reason it has its force for the unspiritual mind incapable of a higher standpoint; and even the religious thinker cannot be displeased to have the structure of his faith rest on the ground, although its pinnacles may pierce the clouds. Let us rejoice that on these very grounds, inadequate as they are, many have advocated a day of rest who are utterly regardless of its religious claims. This belief is at least one round by which they may mount to a more adequate conception. Man cannot give one day of rest to his body without its bringing some higher lessons to his immortal nature.

While the entire being of man was intended by God to be in perfect harmony with itself, it is not so in fact. Sin has placed a dividing chasm between his physical and spiritual natures. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Gal. 5 : 17. It is this antagonism, so deeply felt by man, which has induced many to think that matter is essentially evil, and that the body is the source of sin. But the real fact is that neither in matter nor in the flesh is there anything innately corrupt. It is sin which has introduced war into the being of man and placed his higher and lower natures in opposition one to the other. Therefore it is that the promise of redemption includes the promise of a spiritual body, that is, one which shall perfectly respond to and express the life of the spirit. But this we have not yet attained. While "at home in the body" we are still "absent from the Lord," and in this mortal tenement "we groan, being burdened." 2 Cor. 5 : 2-8. The cares of life, its labors and its pains, all come to distract the gaze of the spirit that we would fain fix upon the mountain-tops, which, above the clouds of our earthly trouble, for ever glow beneath the touch of the everlasting light.

How is man to reconcile his earthly condition, the imperative demands of his body, and the out-

ward limitations which nature imposes upon him, with the higher necessity of communion with God? It is for the solution of this problem, in part, that the Sabbath exists. It comes to still with its touch the din of secular life, to lift the yoke of toil from weary shoulders, and to unseal the spiritual senses that can behold the larger life and hear the music of the "choir invisible." It is the summit of the week, raised above all common thoughts and works, above the sense-bound world; an Ararat where the ark of the soul may rest after being tossed on its weekly deluge of cares; a Sinai where still the Eternal speaks his awful but needed lessons of human duty; a Hermon where again Jesus in transfigured glory stands before us; an Olivet where our straining eyes catch not indistinct glimpses of the ascended Lord. And on this mount of blessing we tabernacle not now for ever, but ever leave its radiant heights to carry something of its glory through the work-days of the week. Its gifts of grace are to be the inspiration of daily toil; after the transfiguration splendor comes the casting out of devils on the plain. In this way does the Sabbath help to close up the deep rent which sin has made in the life of man, and bring again spirit and nature into harmony. Not only is it a reminiscence of that Edenic rest, when God, man, and nature were

in perfect unison; not only does it point forward to the great renewal when the whole creation shall shine in her robes of coronal glory, but it gives to man even now some taste of the substance of that eternal life, forfeited by the fall, regained in Christ, and to be perfected at his second coming.

It is frequently contended by opponents of the Sabbath that "relegating religious duties to certain periods and days is most grateful to human nature, but radically hostile to Christian principles."\* There is a certain deceptive plausibility about this theory that every day should be a Sabbath which might lead men astray, were it not so easy to discern that this very view is precisely the one most grateful to that human nature which it so loudly affects to despise. An every-day Sabbath means ultimately no Sabbath at all. The keen and caustic thrust of Irving is not undeserved:

"Shrewd men, indeed, these new reformers are!  
Each week-day is a Sabbath, they declare:  
A Christian theory! The unchristian fact is  
Each Sabbath is a week-day in their practice."

Let it be freely granted that religion should permeate the whole life and not be confined to certain days and acts; that, in some sense, every

\* Baden Powell, "Christianity against Judaism," 187. See also Stanley's "Life of Arnold."

meal should be a sacrament, every act of labor a prayer, and every word a benediction. Eating and drinking and all things should shine with the "glory of God." To the consecrated spirit the veriest drudgery of life is ennobled, and the surrounding walls of material environment become almost crystal-clear to let through the divine glory. But this does not supersede the need of special seasons of communion with God. The command, "Pray without ceasing," does not make stated worship less valuable or even less necessary. Quite the contrary; it is the hour of prayer alone that gives that spirit of prayer which abides with us during the whole day. So it is only a hallowed Sabbath that can lend a Sabbath's blessing to the entire week. It is just such a condescension to human nature as are the sacraments, easily bridging for us the gulf between the seen and the unseen. That all things are alike holy is not true. Both Scripture and conscience refuse to place all things and acts on the same level. The very meaning of the word "holy" is against such a supposition. The very conditions of our present life imply a distinction between the things that are worldly and the things that are heavenly. Worldly things, indeed, should be transfused with the light of the heavenly things; but the difference exists, for all that. To utterly

confuse the two would be to endanger all the interests of man. It never is done, however, except in words. Those who pretend to make all things equally sacred really make nothing so. There is a cant of supercilious spiritualism as much to be avoided, and quite as offensive, as that of a rigid formalism. It is impossible to introduce on earth a state of things which only the conditions of the heavenly state can realize. The Sabbath has typical meanings not yet fulfilled. In heaven, and there alone, will man celebrate an eternal Sabbath. And until its meaning is consummated in that more glorious life, the Sabbath must abide as the prophet of its coming blessedness and the school which shall prepare man for its holier employments.

Religion requires stated seasons for its observances. Bishop Andrews said, long ago, "The heathen men by the light of nature have seen that everything is then best ordered when it hath but one office; that is, whatsoever is done, it must be thoroughly done, it must be alonely done. The reason is, we are finite creatures, and if two things be done at once, one part of our thoughts will be taken from the other; we cannot wholly intend two things at once."\* If to other duties we properly give, for their better performance, their particu-

\* Bishop Andrews, "The Moral Law Expounded," 328.



lar seasons and appointed times, how much more necessary and proper it is to have determinate times for those duties which undergird and inspire all others—the offices of worship and spiritual exercise. And more than this, these seasons must be periodic, must return with regularity. The law of habit, so powerful to fix and ingrain evil on the soul, must be enlisted on the side of goodness. To give the Sabbath its full value in the discipline of life, the waves of its cleansing must beat with regular rhythm upon the life of man. It must come one day in seven. That proportion which is found to be best to mark the rest required for the body and mind, which has been indorsed by sanitary and economic law, and which, above all, has been disclosed by revelation, is without doubt the best for the culture of the religious nature.

Public, even more than personal, religion depends on the existence of a day of worship. It is possible that Sunday as a day of rest might for a short time survive the destruction of the Christian church, but Christianity could not endure without its Sabbath. This society which we call the church has in it many features analogous to the Sabbath. It has an inward, unseen life of its own, a spiritual existence as the kingdom of God; it has likewise outward forms of varying manifes-

tation in organizations and rites, which are transient and changing. But it is necessary for its work in the world that in some form it should be visible. It must have a definite setting in time and space before it can touch us time-and-space-imprisoned spirits. Its only temporal institution is the Sabbath. Without that institution it could not exist. Every sanction of the church is also a sanction of the Sabbath. The "gates of hell shall not prevail" against the Lord's day any more than against his church, for they are both founded upon the rock of his Divinity.

To give up the day of public worship would be in time to give up public worship altogether. It could not long persist without its appointed seasons. Give up the Sabbath, and soon no inviting bells would sweep down the busy streets, into the palaces of the rich or the cottages of the poor, with their sweet call to praise and prayer; soon no united voice of singing would raise its holy hymns to mingle with the harmony of heaven; and soon the preaching of the declared will of God and the glad offer of his salvation would be stilled for ever, and the last prophetic voice that still cries in the wilderness of this world would be hushed into enduring silence. "Where there is no vision the people perish," Prov. 29:18, and when, through the loss of the

one day of outlook, all spiritual vision is lost, when church spires no longer point heavenward nor cast their reprovng shadows across the market-place, then indeed shall the earth be cursed of God, and the "abomination of desolation" be set up. Thus along another line of thought we find the Sabbath to be our guardian against a reign of universal brutishness.

These considerations, which arise from the moral necessity of the case, are abundantly confirmed by experience. Of the value of the Sabbath to personal religion the whole story can never be told, for the reason that the hidden life is never garrulous; it ever shrinks from revealing its inmost feelings to the gaze of the world.

"God only and good angels look  
Behind the blissful screen."

Yet it may be safely averred that the holiest character everywhere has been nurtured by the Sabbath. The gentle spirit of Rutherford, the compassionate love of Howard, the untiring zeal of Wesley, the self-denying saintliness of Fletcher of Madeley, the intelligent devotion of Jonathan Edwards, the blood-earnestness of Chalmers, all these, and the list might be extended to take in almost every name on the bead-roll of Protestant saintship, have, as witnessed by personal testimo-

nies, found the Sabbath indispensable to the growth of that inner life of communion with God and that outer life of benevolent activity for which they were so preëminent. Chalmers says, "We never, in the whole course of our recollections, met with a Christian friend who bore upon his character every other evidence of the Spirit's operation who did not 'remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.'" It is recorded of Eliot, the missionary: "His observance of the Sabbath was remarkable. Every day was a sort of Sabbath to him; but the Sabbath was with him a type and foretaste of heaven; nor would you hear anything drop from his lips on that day but the milk and honey of that country in which there yet 'remaineth a rest for the people of God.'" With this testimony accord, so far as we can know, the teaching and practice of all those holy souls who have loved God supremely and their neighbor with equal reciprocal affection.

Where Christianity is purest the Sabbath is best observed. While it is not within the proper bounds of this work to claim any special superiority for any communion of Christians, that Protestantism is to be preferred to Romanism may be safely claimed, not only on the grounds of Scriptural authority, but by the logic of history. And it would seem perfectly fair to assert that

among the Protestant churches those deserve pre-eminence which are most largely engaged in philanthropic work, which have the greatest evangelistic zeal, which are most earnestly working for the conversion of the world, and which most emphatically regard religion as the great business of life. He who has read these words knows already without controversy what religious societies are meant. The great evangelical churches of Europe and America, the churches whose religion is the Bible, whose head is Jesus Christ, and whose faith is in his atonement, these are the bodies which most sacredly regard the Sabbath day and most earnestly press its observance upon all men. Whether their keeping of the Sabbath is the cause or effect of their active religious life and purity of doctrine is not material; probably it is partly both. All truth is related to all truth, and acts and reacts on all truth. So the Sabbath is not less the security of orthodoxy than is orthodoxy the security of the Sabbath. If the authority of the Sabbath is, therefore, to be tested by its relationship to other religious truths, the argument for its high obligation is the strongest possible, for it has always been vitally related to the highest standards of Christian doctrine and life.

This is also exemplified by the fact that spe-

cial religious revival has always stood related to a freshened earnestness of Sabbath observance. The great Puritan movement, which, in spite of all its extravagance and fanaticism, was inspired by the breath of God, with doubtless too great rigidity, yet with unflinching devotion to the Word of God, gave honor to his Sabbaths. Some day, perhaps, history will learn to fairly judge these Puritans, and when that day comes we shall find ourselves accepting, almost without reserve, not in full detail but in outline, their ideals of truth and life, and with these not a gloomy but a holy Sabbath. Those writers who criticise severely the Puritans, and have no words of reproach for that shameful period which they choose to call "reaction," in the days of Charles II., are guilty of the most contemptible moral obliquity. Human nature is too prone to "react" against goodness; but that fact casts no shadow of blame on piety, and does not make it decent to abuse it. Puritanism, as a great moral and spiritual reformation, testifies to the high religious need of a Sabbath. With the Puritans' mode of observance we have nothing to do; to the need of observance their intense religious consciousness emphatically testifies.

The great Methodist revival teaches the same lesson. The Earl of Stanhope indeed complains,

as have others, of Puritanism, that "it is one of the ill effects of Methodism that it has tended to narrow the circle of innocent enjoyments." It is possible that neither Puritans nor Methodists were fully aware of how much they were to be pitied in this regard! William Jay, speaking of his personal acquaintance with some persons who were converted under the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield, and who were still living, says, "The Sabbath was their delight, and they numbered the days till its arrival." A day so longed for could hardly have been a day of mortification and of gloom. No one can adequately measure the results of this eighteenth century revival. It lives to-day in a quickened Christendom, in great missionary societies, in the Sunday-school; it has touched all the springs of modern philanthropic effort. In its beginning, and through all its history, not only in the religious societies which it originated, but in its influence on the whole Christian church, it has testified to the Sabbath.

The proof is complete that the religious consciousness at its best feels the need of the day of rest and worship, both for the individual and the organized religious life.

The religious use of the Sabbath, as has been intimated, is the only security for its secular ob-

servance. We may go farther and contend that its secular value largely, if not wholly, depends on its hours being employed religiously. This is the reason, and it deserves a record in letters of gold: *the life of the spirit is the great vitalizer and restorer of mind and body!* The truest rest is not always inaction, is not always to be found in passive repose. Idleness is not restorative, but debilitating both to mind and body. The real idea of the Sabbath is not repose, but power. In physics there is a difference between rest and inertia: the former is the cessation of motion; the latter is the absence of force. Rest comes by equilibrium of forces. The highest rest, therefore, is to be found in something positive, and not by mere negation of activity. It means recovery, restoration of power. Man rests his mind by changing the character of its effort. Such must be the life of heaven; not one of vain endeavor or of unmeaning indolence, but that of fully balanced action and untiring energy.

“ Rest is not quitting  
This busy career,  
Rest is the fitting  
Of self to one's sphere.  
'T is the brook's motion,  
Clear without strife,  
Seeking the ocean  
After its life.



'T is loving and serving  
The highest and best;  
'T is onward, unswerving,  
And this is true rest.\*

The only road away from the treadmill of earthly toil is that which leads outward into spiritual activity. On this road the Sabbath is the open gateway; or, rather, it brings down heaven to man's inmost being, and gives him weekly contact with its very essence. Out of this world of power alone can come power to our human nature. Spirit alone never tires, and only from the spirit can new energy be derived for the flagging strength of man. The words of the prophet abide still in unchanged force of meaning: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah 11:31.

The Sabbath is, therefore, necessary to man's highest nature; it leads him to his true life in the spirit; it draws him away from the temporal to the eternal, and is the abiding type of the life of heaven.

This chapter cannot be better concluded than by quoting the quaint old lines of Henry Vaughan, entitled, "Son-dayes:"

\* Goethe.

“Bright shadows of true rest! some shoots of bliss;  
Heaven once a week;

The next world's gladness prepossessed in this;  
A day to seek

Eternity in time; the steps by which

We climb above all ages; lamps that light  
Man through his heap of dark days; and the rich  
And full redemption of the whole week's flight;

“The milky way chalked out with suns; a clew  
That guides through erring hours; and in full story  
A taste of heaven on earth; the pledge and cue  
Of a full feast; and the out-courts of glory.”

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE PRIMITIVE SABBATH.

“Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers (for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow): shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?”

JOB 8:8-10.

IF the Sabbath, as has been claimed thus far in this argument, was instituted for spiritual reasons at the creation of man, and if, furthermore, it was ordained because it was vitally related to the whole life of man, physical, social, and religious, we should expect to find some trace of it in the early history of the world. The earliest world, indeed, is shut off from our search by that great deluge which swept away at once its monuments and inhabitants. The ages immediately following have left but the scantiest remains of their customs and history. The science of prehistoric archæology is in its infancy. Very numerous or very definite proofs are impossible in the very nature of the case, but such as we have are thereby given the greater weight. If of our limited knowledge of those years the Sabbath forms a not unimportant part, can we not claim that the institution

must have been of some importance to so set its mark even on these meagre records? and may we not expect that further light will only increase the evidence of its early existence and acknowledged obligation?

There is indeed no Scriptural reference to Sabbath observance among the antediluvians. Yet it may fairly be argued that the existence of religious worship among them implies stated seasons for its observance, and that the longevity of the patriarchs can hardly be accounted for if they violated the important sanitary law of rest. We ought not to be surprised at this lack of mention of the Sabbath from Adam to the giving of the manna. The story of that period fills but a few pages in the Bible. Nearly half of those are given to the account of the bondage in Egypt, during which, almost certainly, the observance of the day must have ceased. The books of the Bible from Joshua to the First Book of Kings inclusive fill nearly twice as much space, and they contain no record of a Sabbath, although coming after the time of Moses. There are histories of Christian doctrine filling volumes and thousands of pages which do not so much as mention the Lord's day among the means of grace; yet the conclusion that it, consequently, had not existed would be evidently false. The first pages of the

Bible furnish only a broad historic outline of the main features in that preparation for redemption which God was making among the nations of men. No argument whatever can be drawn from their silence on the subject of the Sabbath.

Yet we can find in the Bible circumstantial evidence for the early existence of the Sabbath. The cycle of the week seems to have been in use from the earliest ages. Three times in the account of the Flood is the period of seven days mentioned. The continuance of mourning for seven days is mentioned in the case of Joseph at the death of Jacob his father, Gen. 50 : 10, and in the instance where the friends of Job express their sympathy with him. Job 2 : 13. The "week" is also named as the length of the season of nuptial rejoicing in the marriage of Jacob to the daughters of Laban. Gen. 29 : 27. There is every warrant for the assertion of La Place that "the week is perhaps the most ancient and incontestable monument of human knowledge."\*

Whether or not we regard the week as an abiding symbol of the creative process, or whether we attempt to trace in it a reference to the month, and look upon it as an attempt to roughly mark out the lunar phases we now call quarters, we still must connect in thought the seven days of

\* La Place, "Œuvres," VI. 1, 3. Paris, 1846.

the first chapter of Genesis with the other similar periods in the Pentateuch. Let the existence of the week and of religious worship be granted, and the conclusion is almost irresistible that a stated day of the one would furnish the natural time for the celebration of the other, especially when that had been revealed in the beginning as the right portion of time to be so employed. This argument from inference is perhaps as strong as anything could be short of direct evidence and positive statement.

But the weight of the case need not be suffered to rest on circumstantial evidence alone. Ancient documents have come to light which strongly indicate the existence of Sabbatic institutions before the time of Moses. Recent discoveries point to conclusions totally opposed to the critical theories and ingenious exegesis of that host of writers who have denied the patriarchal Sabbath. Not least in importance of the confirmations of Scripture afforded by modern exploration is the support which has been given to the institution of the Sabbath.

The Assyrian tablets now in the British Museum which relate to the Creation and the Flood are copies of much older Chaldæan records, and these must have been the embodiment of traditions still more ancient. The original manu-

scripts may, perhaps, be dated at least two hundred years before the time when Abraham left Chaldæa, and six centuries before the giving of the law to Moses, and they were based on legends and traditions older still than even the remote period named. Assyriologists pretty well agree in this approximation of dates.\*

George Smith claimed that he discovered in the fifth tablet of the series, which he calls "The Creation and the Fall," after the narrative of the appointment of the luminaries of heaven to mark times and seasons, a declaration that the seventh day was appointed as a holy day, and that command was given to cease from all work on that day.† If his translation is correct, some resemblance to the Biblical account of the distinction of the seventh day may be traced here, and with probability referred to a tradition based on a primitive revelation. Other eminent Assyriologists, it is true, do not accept Smith's translation in all its particulars; and it must be admitted that in any case this claimed distinction of the seventh day appears in the account of occurrences which the inspired Scriptures assign to the *fourth* day, while

\* Discussion of the age of these records can be found in G. Smith's "Chaldæan Account of Creation."

† "Assyrian Discoveries," 12. See the translation of this tablet by W. Fox Talbot in Appendix A.

its connection with the description of the moon's phases would give probability to the opinion that the seventh day of the *month* was intended.

In 1869, however, Mr. Smith discovered in Nineveh a religious calendar. In this every month is divided into four weeks of *seven* days each, and every seventh day is marked by prohibitions of work. Rev. A. H. Sayce, who has translated a part of this calendar, says of it,

“The chief interest attaching to it is due to the fact that it bears evidence of a seventh-day Sabbath, on which certain works were forbidden to be done among the Babylonians and Assyrians. It will be observed that many of the regulations are closely analogous to the Sabbatical injunctions of the Levitical law and the practice of the Rabbinical Jews. What I render ‘Sabbath’ is expressed by the Accadian words which literally signify ‘*dies nefastus*,’ and a bilingual syllabary makes them equivalent to the Assyrian ‘*yum salumi*,’ or ‘day of completion’ (of labors). The word ‘Sabbath’ was not unknown to the Assyrians, and occurs under the form ‘*Sabbatu*.’ . . . . The original text must be ascribed to some period anterior to the seventeenth century B. C.”

In this calendar almost identical language is used in giving instructions for the seventh, four-



teenth, twenty-first, and each succeeding seventh day. The flesh of birds or cooked fruits could not be eaten, nor garments be changed, nor white robes be worn on that day. The king could not ride in his chariot, law could not be made, no military commands could be issued, and no medicine could be taken.\* Le Normant, indeed, thinks that these days were days of ill-omen and not true Sabbaths. Yet he asserts that the Assyrians "recognized the Sabbath. This fact," he says, "may be positively inferred from the passage of a fragment of a lexicon of Assyrian synonyms, wherein '*yum nuh libbi*,' 'day of repose of the heart, day of joy,' is translated '*Sabbatur*,' 'Sabbath.'"† The testimony of this great Orientalist fully confirms the translations of Mr. Sayce.

The traces of a septenary division of time are widely spread throughout the nations of the East. Its existence in Assyria and Babylonia is fully established. It was known to Saracens from time immemorial, and the Mohammedan observance of Friday seems to have been but the consecration by the founder of Islam of an older usage. Its early existence in India is proved by linguistic

\* "Records of the Past," VII. 157.

† See Le Normant, "Beginnings of History," 249, American edition. See also "Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia," II. Pl. 32.

testimony from the names of the days. There is supposed reference to the week in Chinese records which, it is claimed, date back to the great emperor Fah He, 3000 B. C. The Romans introduced it from Egypt not far from the time of the Christian era.\* It seems in later times to have borne an intimate relation to the pseudo-science of astrology, whose antiquity is well known, the names of the week-days being for the most part in later classic and modern usage derived from that one of the planets which presided over the first hour of each day.† Even at so great a distance from its first institution as Guinea, in Africa, there was observed the week and a weekly day of rest. By the account of Porphyry, the Phœnicians "set apart the seventh day as holy." Thus throughout the Orient, whence have radiated the races of mankind, we find existing this oldest symbol of the creative period and most ancient division of time. It strongly supports the theory of a primitive Sabbath.

\* Dion Cassius, "History of Rome," XXXVII. 18.

† As this consecration of the hour began with Saturn, the farthest removed planet from the earth on the Ptolemaic theory, Saturday is the first day of the astrological week. If the Babylonian week was astrological, which, however, is improbable, Moses set the whole week, and consequently the Sabbath, one day forward. At any rate this proves that there is no definite day on which the week can be said to commence.

This widespread diffusion of the week seems to account for the sacred character everywhere assigned to the number seven. Let it once be remembered that the first note in the history of this number in any significant relation is in connection with the creative week, and its use as a number with peculiar meanings is at once accounted for. That Greece had seven wise men, and that we know of seven wonders of the world, that the perfect number of offerings in Moab, Greece, and Rome was seven, that more than one religion has dreamed of seven heavens, that from Pythagoras to Schlegel\* men have earnestly tried to make out exactly seven planets—all these facts, and countless more that might be mentioned, reveal a condition of human thinking hard to be explained unless we believe that from the beginning seven has possessed a peculiar sacredness from marking the recurrence of a sacred day of worship. No number is naturally so little likely to be used. The digital method of computing by fives and tens is that which is most likely to suggest itself to the primitive mind, and has in fact become the basis of nearly all systems of calculation. The use of seven is thus seen to be wholly arbitrary, and must first have arisen from causes wholly outside of any natural reflection on

\* Schlegel, "Philosophy of Life." Lecture IV.

the properties of numbers. It is easily understood when we consider its sanctity to be derived from the sanctity of the seventh day.\*

It is, indeed, contended by some that the number seven derived its importance from that being the number of the planets known. The fact is precisely the reverse. Because of the symbolical and sacred character ascribed to the number seven the ancients attempted to make out exactly seven planets. This they were able to do only by adding the sun and moon to the five planets then known, and thus they gave artificially a basis to the hebdomadal conception of the heavenly bodies. "The sacred character of the number seven . . . dates back to the remotest antiquity among the Chaldæo-Babylonians and is greatly anterior to" the planetary week.† Lepsius has also disproved the ancient existence of the plane-

\* Bähr, in his "Symbolism of the Mosaic Worship," advances the theory that seven is made up of the four, the signature of the world, and three, the number which signifies God, and therefore expresses everywhere the relation of God to the world; it is the covenant number. This can hardly be made out. It seems more probable that seven is the exact number of the time-worlds or "æons," of which the last is the life of man and the Sabbath of God. From this fact it comes to be the number of completion. On its general signification see Herzog, "Realencyclopädie." The theory which connects seven with the creation is the only one which has any show of plausibility.

† Le Normant, "Beginnings of History," 249.

tary week in Egypt,\* and Tischendorf affirms that there is complete absence, not only in the Old or New Testament, but also in the Talmud, of any traces of the names of week-days being taken from the planets.†

It is probable that the week is to be traced in an altered form in the decades of ancient Egypt and of Greece, and in the nundines of Rome. The attempt to substitute a decade for the week in the French calendar during the Revolution proves the possibility of such corruptions. In their Oriental home the future Europeans must have observed the week, if the testimony from Hindoo sources can be trusted. The modifications which come to language, customs, and worship are well known and need no proof. When untaught by revelation and undirected by a divine code, the human heart is but too prone to substitute its plans and theories for the enactments of Deity. The periods of ten days used by Egyptians and Greeks, of eight days by the Romans, of five days by the Aztecs, and of nine days as found among the Peruvians, bear enough resemblance to the institution of the week to justify the claim of a common origin. Furthermore, is it too much to suggest that all heathen holidays

\* Lepsius, "Chronologie der Aeg.," I. 131.

† Quoted in Humboldt's "Cosmos."

are but transformations of the primitive Sabbatic institution? As those heavenly images of the Creator's brightness, the sun, moon, and stars, began to receive the homage due to him alone, his day of holy worship was superseded by those monthly, quarterly, and annual festivals which celebrated the seasons of the year and the phases of the heavenly bodies. Whether this be so or not, the existence of these festivals is sufficient proof of the need everywhere recognized by man of stated seasons for religious exercise, a need in no way so well satisfied as by the weekly recurrence of the Sabbath.

That the Sabbath existed in patriarchal days appears to be sufficiently proved. Some shadow of the presence of this primitive institution seems to have remained with all the nations. Its "line is gone out through all the earth." Only in the line of a written revelation, however, has it retained any measure of purity and asserted its full power. The abiding Sabbath which is the witness of eternity in time has fully manifested itself only along that line of contact of God and the world which is the history of redemption. In this more perfect light of revelation let us trace it through the Sabbath of the law to its more glorious embodiment in the Sabbath of redemption, and onward to the Sabbath of eternity.

PART II.

§ABBATH OF THE LAW.





# THE SABBATH OF THE LAW.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ITS INSTITUTION.

“He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”

ISAIAH 63:9.

ISRAEL left Egypt in search of a Sabbath. There can be little doubt that the captive people knew no day of rest in the house of bondage. That unreasoning selfishness which demanded “bricks without straw” could not have tolerated anything so merciful. Under the cruel lash of the taskmaster their lives went on in ceaseless toil, unrelieved by the Sabbath with its grateful repose for the weary frame and its release of holy thoughts for the imprisoned soul. Israel went out into the wilderness to seek a Sabbath, for they sought rest from their burdens and the opportunity of worship; and these two things, rest and worship, make up the idea of the Sabbath. So Pharaoh, when he reproved Moses and Aaron,

said, "Ye make the people rest (Sabbatize) from their burdens," Exod. 5:5, evidently implying that he considered the whole movement an attempt to gain holidays; and the request of Moses was that the people might hold a sacred feast in the wilderness.

It is therefore no surprise to find that the first institution of religion given to the emancipated nation was the very same with the first given to man—a day for the renewal of physical energies and the unfolding of spiritual powers. God himself provided the feast in the wilderness which marked for them the weekly recurrence of the holy day. The gift of manna, without doubt, furnished the occasion for the institution of the Hebrew Sabbath. The words which announce it are really more forcible than those of our English version: "*Let to-morrow be rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.*"\* Exod. 16:23. The connection of the miraculous supply of food with the seventh day was certainly calculated to strongly impress the Sabbath upon the thoughts and imaginations of the people, and thus was laid a sure foundation for the Sinaitic legislation.

The Sabbath thus instituted is by no means in every respect like the primal rest-day given to man in Paradise. Although it holds in itself the

\* See Keil, "Commentary on the Pentateuch," in loco.

full spiritual content of that ordinance and rests upon that as its reason, yet it has come to embody a new significance special to the Hebrew people as the elect nation of Jehovah. Consequently, in that review of the law in the "people's book," Deuteronomy, the command is given in a form which appeals to Israel as the nation peculiarly under the guidance of Providence: "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm." Deut. 5:15. If the primal Sabbath commemorates the Creation and honors the Creator, the Israelitish Sabbath testifies, in addition to this, to the providential guidance of God's people, and glorifies him as the Ruler and Master of human history. God has not made the world just to sit by and see it go, but himself goes forth every morning to his spiritual tasks of control and government in its affairs. He is not simply watching as it goes sailing on, with its vast cargo of souls, before the currents and breezes of fixed law, but bends down now and then to trim a spar and adjust a sail. No, he rather wears this world of ours as a flower on his bosom, through which every moment the warm flood of his loving care is felt in every petal, thrilling its whole life. He "who is over all, God blessed for ever," sometimes

stoops from the starry skies, and he, the great Artist, retouches the picture of human events until they glow anew with a harmonious union of liberty, love, and light reflected from the Deity. It is to God as providence that the new institution of the Sabbath by the hand of Moses witnesses, while it embodies as well all that was implied in the original ordinance.

The Sabbath is henceforth enriched with added meanings. It not only points back to the beginning of things and speaks of the Power that formed heaven and earth, but it testifies to something present and abiding, to the guiding Hand of strength which bore and carried his people all the days of old, and that Presence which he has pledged to all who trust him: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5. When in the house of bondage his people toiled and groaned under the burdens of Egypt, the cry of the slave pierced his listening ear; and by mighty miracles he delivered them and through wondrous ways he led them into rest. When his fainting people famished in the wilderness, he who "hears the wailing seabird on the hungry shore" showered bread from heaven upon them and fed them with angels' food. The seventh day is newly sacred as a monument to the superintendence and constant care of a loving Heavenly

Father, and as it still returns the trusting heart is assured with weekly iteration of the promise, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Rom. 8 : 28. Through the world's midnight of trouble and sin, in the darkest hour of the world's despair, the Sabbath still keeps its weekly watch and beat, and cries out to our un-resting hearts, "God reigns, and all is well!"

## CHAPTER II.

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

“The Decalogue, that solitary autograph of the Eternal, is not a mistake.”

WENDLING.

“For the permanency of the Sabbath we argue its place in the Decalogue, where it stands enshrined among the moralities of a rectitude that is immutable and everlasting.”

CHALMERS.

THE Sabbath under its three forms has been connected with the most notable event of each divine dispensation. In the primitive age it referred to the work of creation; the Christian Sabbath commemorates a finished redemption; and so the Mosaic dispensation embodied it in that code of laws which, although given to Israel, has a moral significance to all mankind. The giving of the law at Sinai is the loftiest landmark in the history of Israel. It is the beginning of their civil and religious polity. From that moment Israel became the nation of Jehovah, the nation of the law, the leader among the nations of the earth in the search after a positive righteousness. That the Sabbath is a part of that code has therefore a meaning not for the Hebrew alone, but for the whole race of mankind.

Everywhere in the sacred writings of the Hebrews they are reminded that they are the people peculiarly guided by Providence. Historian, Psalmist, and prophet never tire in recounting the marvellous interpositions of Jehovah in behalf of his chosen people. And this thought is the keynote to the Decalogue. "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," Exod. 20:2, is the introduction to the law. When therefore the Sabbath is introduced into the Decalogue, while its old significance as a testimony of creation is not lost, but especially recalled, it becomes, besides, a monument of the divine providence whose particular manifestations Israel, among the the nations, has most largely experienced. The Sabbath of the law is the Sabbath of Providence.

The declaration on Sinai is perhaps the strongest attestation which the Sabbatic ordinance has received. It is henceforth based upon an express command of God himself, is given in circumstances of the most impressive solemnity, and has received the awful sanction of embodiment in the moral law, against which "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. 18:4. God has spoken, and his creatures must obey or perish.

1. *The obligation of the Sabbath is enforced by the obligation of the entire Decalogue.*

We commonly speak of the Decalogue as the "Ten Commandments." A more precise rendering of the Hebrew terms would be the "Ten Words," Exod. 34:28, margin; Deut. 4:13; 10:2, 4, margin, an exact equivalent of which we have, taken from the Greek, in the word "Decalogue." These statutes are therefore not simply commands or precepts of God, for God may give commandments which have only a transient and local effect; they are in a distinctive sense the word of God, an essential part of that word which "abideth." In the Decalogue we get a glimpse of that inner movement of the divine will which is the permanent foundation for all temporary ordinances. It is not contended that this use of language is rigidly uniform, but only that by the phrase, "The Ten Words," as well as in the general scope of Hebrew legislation, the moral law is fully distinguished from the civil and ceremonial law. The first is an abiding statement of the divine will; the last consists of transient ordinances having but a temporary and local meaning and force. The Decalogue is also called the "Testimony," Exod. 25:16 and in many other places, that is, the witness of the divine will; also "the words of the covenant," Exod. 34:28, and "his (i. e., Jehovah's) covenant," Deut. 4:13, upon obedience to which his favor was in a special



manner conditioned. The names given to this code declare its unchanging moral authority.

The manner in which this law was given attests its special sanctity and high authority. Before its announcement the people of Israel by solemn rites sanctified themselves, while the holy mountain was girded with the death-line which no mortal could pass and live. When the appointed day came, to the sublime accompaniment of pealing thunders and flashing lightnings, the loud shrilling of angel-blown trumpets, the smoking mountain, and the quaking earth, from the lips of Jehovah himself sounded forth "with a great voice" the awful sentences of this divine law to which in the same way "he added no more." Deut. 5:22. Not by the mouth of angel or prophet came this sublimest code of morals, but the words were formed in air by the power of the Eternal himself. And when it was to be recorded, no human scribe took down the sacred utterances; they were engraved by no angel hand, but with his own finger he inscribed on tables of stone, whose preparation, in the first instance, was "the work of God," the words of his will. Exod. 31:18; 32:16; 34:1, 4, 28. The law declared by his own mouth and indited by his own hand was finally placed in the ark of the covenant, underneath the mercy-seat, where sprinkled

blood might atone for its violation; between the cherubim, symbols perhaps of the divine watch and guard, and beneath the flaming manifestation of the very presence of the Almighty, the glory of the Shekinah; circumstances signifying for ever the divine source of this law and the divine solicitude that it should be obeyed. This superior solemnity and majesty of announcement and conservation distinguish the Decalogue above all other laws given to man, and separate it widely from the civil polity and ritual afterwards given by the hand of Moses. These latter are written by no almighty finger and spoken to the people by no divine voice. For these it is sufficient that Moses hear and record them.

Of the law thus impressively given the Fourth Commandment forms a part. Amid the same cloud of glory, the same thunders and lightnings, uttered by the same dread voice of the Infinite One, and graven by his finger, came forth these words as well: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." It is impossible, in view of these facts, to class the Sabbath with the ceremonial institutions of Israel. By the sacred seal of the divine lip and finger it has been raised far above those perishing rites. In other words, it belongs to that moral law which Paul calls "holy and just and good," Rom. 7:12, and not that ritual

law of which Peter declares "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" it. Acts 15:10.

2. *The Sabbath cannot be excepted from the moral obligation of the whole Decalogue.*

Nothing can be found in the form of words in which the Fourth Commandment is expressed which indicates that it is less universal in its obligation or less absolute in its authority than the other nine with which it is associated. By universal admission all the rest are perpetual and universal in their obligation. But it is sometimes claimed that this is simply a Mosaic institute, and therefore of transient force; that this has not, like the others, an inward reason which appeals to the conscience; that it is, in short, not a moral but a positive precept.

It is evident that the burden of proof on this point rests upon those who oppose the Sabbath. The proof which would exclude this commandment from the throne of moral authority on which the others are seated should amount to demonstration. The illusory character of the distinction between positive and moral precepts has already been shown. It is hardly possible to prove that the natural conscience of man will sustain any one of the nine others with greater force than the one in dispute. Even Sparta, with her generally high moral ideal, consecrated theft and falsehood

as a necessary step in the creation of heroic character. The race has come gradually to recognize the necessary grounds on which most of the moral virtues rest. Some day, doubtless, the grounds of the Sabbath will be seen to be quite as necessary and universal as those of honesty and chastity. The distinction cannot be maintained between this commandment and the remainder of the Decalogue. The prohibition of image-worship is not deemed essential by either Roman or Greek Christianity, but the more spiritual mind of Protestantism can see that this law is absolutely necessary to guard a truly spiritual conception of Deity. So, many excellent Christians have failed to discern the moral necessity of the Sabbath. Clearer insight will reveal that all the laws of the first table are guarded by this institution, as all in the second table are enforced by the tenth, "Thou shalt not covet."

It may be freely admitted that the Decalogue, in the form in which it is stated, contains transient elements. These, however, are easily separable. For example, the promise attached to the requirement of filial reverence, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," has a very evident reference to Israel alone, and is a promise of national perpetuity in possession of the promised land. Even

this element is not entirely of limited application, however, for Paul quotes the commandment, in his letter to the Christians of Ephesus, Eph. 6:2, as "the first . . . with promise," evidently understanding the covenant of long life to have a wider scope than simply the Hebrew nationality. And it is clear that nothing can be imagined which could give more enduring stability to civil institutions than that law-abiding character which is based on respect for superiors and obedience to their commands. This serves to illustrate how we may regard the temporal element in the law of the Sabbath. It does not bind us to the precise day, but to the seventh of our time. And this accidental and transient element of the law, which can be traced in the other commandments as well, and which grows out of the fact that, although a law for all mankind, it was given to a particular people, does not affect that element, in this as in all the other commandments, which is universal and abiding in its meaning.

There is nothing in the essence of the Sabbath law which marks it as more adapted to Israel than to the remainder of mankind. On one day in seven it requires abstinence from the servile work ("labor"), the ordinary worldly business and occupation ("work"), of the other six days. It prescribes periodic rest from periodic

labor. To every race and generation of men has come the sentence pronounced on the first man, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Gen. 3:19. The requirement of rest is not a Hebrew but a human necessity. The Sabbath gift of repose comes not with more grateful benediction to the toiling children of Abraham and their cattle than to all the sons and daughters of Adam and the weary beasts that serve them. If the wandering tribes in the wilderness, gathering with every morning their unfailing harvests of the bread of heaven, need a seventh day for rest, much more do the striving multitudes of all times and climes, who after long months of toil wrest their needful food from half-reluctant nature, require its refreshment and restoring power.

Nor is there anything local or temporary in the positive factor of the Sabbatic idea—worship. All men, as well as Israelites, are made in the image of God; all have spiritual natures requiring opportunities for spiritual activity; all need this open gate in time which leads out into eternity. Not in Jerusalem alone is the sole altar of human worship. Religion is a universal institution, and the day of religious worship is a universal need. Its soul-refreshing power is demanded by the nature of Gentile as well as Jew; it has a value to the last ages as well as to the in-

fancy of the world. The reasons of the Fourth Commandment, not less than those of the other nine, are such as apply with equal force to all races of the earth and all ages of the world's history.

3. *The perpetuity of the Decalogue involves the perpetuity of the Sabbath.*

The moral authority of the Decalogue did not begin with its announcement on Sinai. Its precepts had been known and practised through all the patriarchal ages. Murder was condemned in Cain, and dishonor of parents in Ham. To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had come the knowledge of one God, and the last had exhorted his children against image-worship. Gen. 35:2. Theft, falsehood, and adultery are all denounced by the record of pre-Mosaic times. As a declaration of the eternal and unchanging moral law its binding force did not begin with its announcement at Horeb, but dated from the beginning of things, and for the same reason will endure until the consummation of all things. Nor was it given to Israel alone. The Gentiles "show the work of the law written in their hearts." Rom. 2:14, 15.

Jesus Christ has confirmed its obligation: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matt. 19:17. His great generalization of the whole law into the double duty of love to

God and man is a further confirmation of the persistence of its ethical force. James writes: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." James 2:10, 11. It is impossible to suppose that the apostle has not in mind the whole Decalogue, and that he does not equally affirm the profaner of the Sabbath to be a violator of the whole law. In a statement of such gravity he must have specified the exception if any existed. It is worthy of our notice that he bases the sanctity of each command on the fact that each was spoken by one God. But the law of the Sabbath was as surely uttered by the voice of Jehovah as any other precept of the ten. If the "Ten Words" of Sinai live to-day, imposing an unrelaxed obligation upon all mankind, as is testified both by the nature of the legislation and by the authority of Jesus and his apostles,\* the Sabbath shares their perpetuity, both of existence and obligation.

4. *The phraseology of the Fourth Commandment is such as to imply universality and perpetuity.*

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

\* This point will be more fully discussed in Part Third.



Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." EXOD. 20:8-11.

The injunction to "remember" may naturally be interpreted as indicating the existence of a pre-Mosaic Sabbath. The opinion that it has such a reference is supported by the reason cited at the end of the commandment, the creative rest of the Almighty at the beginning. Much ingenuity has been expended to break down the force of this word "remember," but the recent discovery of monumental indications of the actual existence of Sabbatic institutions before Moses tends to confirm its force. The word takes in, in its sweep, all time, past and to come; for while the act of remembrance carries the thought backward to the dawn of history, the command to remember reaches forward to the coming sunset of the world, when Time's brief day shall fade into the dazzling radiance of eternity. It indicates a primitive and abiding Sabbath.

The reason of the command recalls the ordinance of creation. It is very significant that in the rehearsal of the law in Deuteronomy, a recital especially addressed to Israel, the law of the Sabbath is based on the rest given to the people from the bondage of Egypt. Deut. 5:15. But in the law spoken by the mouth of God himself and written by his own finger, the transcript of his will, the reasons assigned for the institution of the Sabbath are such as appeal not to Israel alone, but to man as man. The Sabbath recalls a fact of universal interest, the creation of the world, and is based on a process in the nature of God, who in some ineffable way "rested on the seventh day." The ideas connected with the Sabbath in the Fourth Commandment are thus of the most permanent and universal meaning. The institution in the light of the reasons assigned is as wide as the creation and as eternal as the Creator.

Instituted at the creation by the example of the Creator, its obligation extends to every creature. It is inconceivable, on any theory of inspiration, that any narrower interpretation is to be given to this command. If language is to have any meaning at all, the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment is not simply an Israeli-tish, but a human institution. As it answers a

universal need, so is it enforced by a universal reason, being supported by the only state of facts that could create a perpetual institute the law of the beginning.

It should be noted in this connection that the creative Sabbath is recalled also in the two elements which entered into its being; it is blessed to man by rest and is sanctified to God by worship. "Keep it holy," and, "Do no work," correspond to the "sanctified" and "blessed" which we meet in the second chapter of Genesis. The Sabbath of the law incloses thus the full spiritual intent of the Sabbath of creation. Like that, it is a divine-human institution.

5. *The Fourth Commandment contains elements of abiding force which belong to no other.*

The reference to the creative rest of God is more than a reason; that alone would be trivial; it is a teaching. It reminds Israel of an Edenic Sabbath lost by the fall; it promises an eternal rest in the consummation of the world's history. It is thus the most directly evangelical element in the Decalogue, and as such is most appropriately placed between those commands which state our duty to God and those which state our duty to man. To the Hebrew nation it remained an unfulfilled type; they entered not into rest because of their unbelief. Heb. 4:6. Joshua did

not give them rest, for God has "spoken of another day." "There is an abiding Sabbath for the people of God," which the Sabbath of Israel prefigured. Just as man failed to retain the divine rest in Paradise, but lost it through the fall, so did Israel fail to obtain it; one generation perished in the wilderness, and neither those who entered into the promised land nor their descendants enjoyed a lasting rest. With us still the type lingers, inclosing, indeed, more of the substance in that soul-rest which comes by faith in Him who said, "Come unto me," but its full realization awaits that manifestation of the sons of God when travailing creation shall again shine in Eden's glory.

These considerations cannot be treated with too much gravity. Long should pause the erring hand of man before it dares to chip away with the chisel of human reasonings one single word graven on the enduring tables by the hand of the infinite God. What is proposed? To make an erasure in a heaven-born code; to expunge one article from the recorded will of the Eternal! Is the eternal tablet of his law to be defaced by a creature's hand? He who proposes such an act should fortify himself by reasons as holy as God and as mighty as his power. None but consecrated hands could touch the ark of God; thrice

holy should be the hands which would dare alter the testimony which lay within the ark.

By the lasting authority of the whole Decalogue with which the Fourth Commandment is inseparably connected, which is the embodiment of immutable moral law, and by the very words used in framing the command, the Sabbath is shown to be an institution of absolute, universal, and unchanging obligation.

Here may properly be inserted that prayer which the Anglican Church prescribes as a response to the recitation of each of the Ten Commandments: "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

## CHAPTER III.

TRANSIENT AND PERMANENT ELEMENTS IN  
THE SABBATH OF ISRAEL.

“There is, then, in the Sabbath that which is shadowy and that which is substantial, that which is transient and that which is permanent, that which is temporal and typical and that which is eternal.”

F. W. ROBERTSON.

THE Sabbath of Israel is something more than the institution ordained in the Fourth Commandment. That was something universal and perpetual; but there was also a local and temporary Sabbath, having its ground, indeed, in the commandment, but having also particular features of its own which God ordained for Israel alone. Those who have contended for the present non-obligation of the Sabbath on account of its being a positive institution of Judaism, have entirely overlooked this distinction. In the civil law given by Moses are many injunctions for Sabbath observance, and severe penalties attached to its profanation. None of these are incorporated in the Decalogue; they are entirely independent of that germinal legislation. These injunctions and penalties are no part of the abiding law of the Sabbath. They doubtless fulfilled a wise purpose

in the training of the chosen people; but, having accomplished that end, they passed away and their validity is at an end. They are but the transient in that building of the Sabbath which was erected in Eden and shall stand unshaken in the regained Paradise of man. They were not intended for all men nor for all time. The Mosaic Sabbath, which is distinguished from the abiding Sabbath by these accidents alone, has with these passed away. But the substance remains with unchanged validity and obligation.

The case is exactly similar with the other commandments of the law. Take the case of homicide. In modern times public justice takes the place of that private vengeance, which rightfully executed the law in Israel, and merciful presumptions of law have superseded cities of refuge. Yet, independent of all changes in the mode of procedure or punishment, the moral law, "Thou shalt not kill," lives on, the unchanged foundation of widely differing methods of jurisprudence. While men no longer force their wives to drink the water of jealousy, the Seventh Commandment is as binding as ever. That witchcraft, necromancy, and idolatry are no longer punished by death does not terminate the authority of the command to worship one God and serve him alone, knowing that he is a jealous God who will not share his sove-

reignty with another. So it is with the Sabbath. The ritual details of its observance, the penalties for violation, the particular day of its ordination—all are transient elements whose decadence does not and cannot cause to cease the eternal law which existed before them and still exists after they have passed away. The Decalogue, being an essential portion of the “Word of God that abideth for ever,” is the enduring fountain of all law. Upon this universal code all particular legislation, not of Israel alone, but of all time, must rest. The local and temporal statutes must not be confounded, therefore, with the universal and permanent law. The Fourth Commandment does not differ from the others in this regard. They are all alike abiding in their moral authority and all alike transient in their special manifestations in human statutes and ceremonies.

Although the methods of observing and enforcing a moral law change thus with each changing dispensation, yet these temporary features are still testimonies of the highest value to the sanctity and obligation of the law. And this testimony is the more weighty when these statutes, temporary though they may be, have been prescribed by divine authority, as was the case with the Mosaic civil polity and ceremonial system. In this manner the Israelitish Sabbath, although no longer



binding upon mankind, is of the highest interest as a witness to the sacred character of the abiding Sabbath. Every injunction, ceremony, and penalty connected with it adds to the conception of its holiness and authority.

Upon the Sabbath the people were to gather in holy convocations, Lev. 23 : 3, when doubtless they received religious instruction, including, later at least, the reading of the law. Acts 15 : 21. Special acts of worship were reserved to this day; double sacrifices were enjoined to be offered in the tabernacle and temple, Num. 28 : 9, 10; the show-bread was renewed on the table of the sanctuary, Lev. 24 : 8; and songs of praise were sung, the ninety-second Psalm being specially entitled, "For the Sabbath day." The prophets seem to have made a particular use of this day for addressing the people, as is evidenced by the question, "Wherefore wilt thou go to the man of God to-day? it is neither new moon nor Sabbath." 2 Kings 4 : 23. Nor is the day less impressively marked by prohibitions. Upon it no work was to be done by man or beast; the preparation of food was forbidden, Exod. 16 : 5, 23; no fire was to be kindled in any habitation, Exod. 35 : 3; a man was even put to death for gathering sticks, Num. 15 : 32; by implication all buying and selling were deemed unlawful, Neh. 10 : 31; and

travelling was afterwards held to be forbidden by Exod. 16 : 29.

As if it were desired to make the motives for obedience more urgent still, the death-penalty was affixed to profanation of the Sabbath. "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death." Exod. 35 : 2. There is but one recorded case of the execution of the sentence. Num. 15 : 32-36. Whether or not it was ever enforced again in Israel, its existence on the statute-books of the nation is a testimony of the strongest kind to the divine estimate of the worth of the Sabbath.

While the Sabbath of Israel had features which enforce and illustrate the abiding Sabbath, it must not be forgotten that it had a wholly distinct existence of its own. It must not be regarded as merely one form which the real Sabbath has taken in history, a form ordained for a particular period and people. Moses really instituted something new, something different from the old patriarchal seventh day. Not improbably a different day was chosen, particular observances were enjoined, and new meanings were commemorated by this recurring festival. In keeping it Israel truly kept a "Sabbath to the Lord," but its spe-

cial obligations rested only on Israelites and those dwelling on Israelitish soil. The Mosaic Sabbath was the Sabbath of a limited and temporary dispensation; it never had the universal sweep of the primitive Sabbath or of the Christian Lord's day which has superseded it. It is the only institution which is directly called Sabbath in the Bible, which circumstance has led many excellent men too hastily to conclude that, because it was abolished, therefore no similar institution is now in existence as of divine obligation. But from the Hebrew ordinance the name Sabbath has come to be applied to that perpetual ordinance of rest and worship which existed from the beginning and shall endure with undiminished obligation until the end of human generations. In the Mosaic Sabbath, for the time of its endurance and no longer, was embodied, for a particular people and no others, this permanent institution which was ordained at creation and which lives now with more excellent glory in the Lord's day. The generations of the flowers come and go with the spring-time and frosts of each recurring season, but in the seed their life is carried forward from year to year with undying beauty. So has it been with the Sabbath. Its outward form has changed, but its inner life has still the freshness and vigor given it in the morning of the world.

## CHAPTER IV.

SOME SCRIPTURE TESTIMONIES TO THE VALUE  
OF THE SABBATH.

“This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” PSA. 118:24.

ELSEWHERE in this essay are given many facts connected with the Sabbath in Holy Scripture which exemplify its value and enforce its obligations. It was first proclaimed amid that angelic symphony which celebrated a finished creation; it was again announced by the awful voice of Jehovah amid the flaming terrors of Sinai; it took on its final most glorious meaning when the conquering Son of God came forth leading in chains the vanquished “king of terrors.” The abiding Sabbath shines with the reflected radiance of these three great events.

When God entered upon the ethical teaching of the race through his chosen people, he gave special prominence to the Sabbath. In the moral law which he delivered to them this commandment is perhaps the most full and explicit of all, being the only one which expressly charges their memory, the only one which is presented in both

a positive and a negative aspect, and one of the four which embody an argument and rest on a rendered reason. For forty years he set upon the Sabbath the sacred seal of miracle by the six days' gift of manna and the uncorrupted portion of the seventh. Based upon its analogy, he gave their national life the seven-fold rhythm of Sabbatic and Jubilee years, and interwove the number seven [into their entire religious symbolism. In such ways has God signalized and attested the honor due to the Sabbath day.

Under the theocracy, profanation of the Sabbath was punishable with death, and one of the few recorded instances other than divine judgments in which during the wandering in the wilderness the death-penalty was inflicted on a disobedient Israelite is a case of Sabbath-breaking. No sin calls forth more awful threatenings from Jehovah through the mouth of the prophets than this. For the sin of "polluting the Sabbath" multitudes of Israel perished in the wilderness; for the same sin the people were scattered among the heathen. Ezek. 20:12-24. Upon its observance depended the very existence of Hebrew nationality. "If ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire

in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." Jer. 17:27. In a terrible catalogue of the sins of the city of Jerusalem it is charged, "Thou hast despised mine holy things and hast profaned my Sabbaths." Ezek. 22:8. In the time of Amos those who wearied of the Sabbath (Amos 8:5) are menaced by many calamities. In these penalties and fearful threatenings of judgment has God testified to the sacredness of the day he hallowed at the beginning and has ever honored in history.

Not only by penalties, but by blessings; not only by threats, but by promises, has he distinguished the Sabbath. God blessed the seventh day; and not on insensate time did the benediction fail, but on that being for whom the Sabbath was made. Its blessing comes to those who sacredly observe it. Isaiah under divine inspiration proclaims, "Blessed is the man . . . that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it. . . Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths and choose the things that please me and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also . . . every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, . . . even

them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer." Isa. 56:2-7. And in another place, by the same inspired pen, the Sabbath and its proper glory are described in glowing language: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasure nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isa. 58:13, 14. Through Jeremiah it is promised that if the Sabbath is honored by Jerusalem, "this city shall remain for ever." Jer. 17:24, 25.

What reason has taught us as to the advantages of the Sabbath to individuals and to nations, is confirmed abundantly by the declarations of the Word of God.

## CHAPTER V.

## HISTORY OF THE SABBATH IN ISRAEL.

“Hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.”

EZEK 20:20.

THE Sinaitic Sabbath was a covenant sign between God and his people. It commemorated their national deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and was a type of the rest which remains for the people of God. “I gave them my Sabbath to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Ezek. 20:12. It was the germ of much of the external polity of the nation. The seventh month, Lev. 23:23-36, and year, ch. 25:1-7, came to share in some degree its sacredness; the second great annual feast and the year of jubilee succeeded respectively “seven Sabbaths” from a designated day, ch. 23:15, 16, and “seven Sabbaths of years,” ch. 25:8-12. The chief days of the great yearly festivals, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, were described as Sabbaths. So also was the great annual fast, or day of Atonement:\* much in the laws, customs, and en-

\* Exod. 12:16; Lev. 23:7, 8, 21, 24, 32, 39.



ture civil and religious life of Israel thus kept time to the septuple movement of recurring Sabbaths.

Those are greatly mistaken who regard the Israelitish Sabbath as a day of mere inactivity. It was truly a sacred festival. The sanctification of the Sabbath was to be accomplished not by mere cessation from secular toil, but by holy rites and religious exercises. The assemblies which were appointed to meet on this day were not mere crowds, but holy convocations. The double sacrifices, the changed show-bread, the special Psalms—all indicate that the religious view of the day was not disregarded by the Hebrew people. It was also a day of religious instruction. Josephus remarks: "Moses permitted the people to leave off their other employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week."\* Philo Judæus says that this custom always continued among the Jews of gathering on the seventh days to learn and discuss their religious philosophy.†

Nor was the requirement of rest so rigid and inflexible as may be imagined. Even in the

\* Josephus, "Against Apion," II. 18.

† Philo Judæus, "Works," 685. Paris, 1640.

days of strictest observance Jesus could, without rebuke or offence, accept an invitation to a Sabbath dinner at the house of a principal member of the rigid Pharisaic sect. Luke 14:1. It seems probable that the law of necessity was recognized from the beginning, and that the prohibition of preparing food or kindling fire did not interdict the absolutely necessary labor of the Sabbath. The general rule, quite probably, was that given in connection with the Passover: "In the first day . . . and in the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you," Exod. 12:16.

It was not a day of gloom, but of gladness: it testified to joyful events in the national history, and so far from being a penance, it was to be a "delight" and "honorable." Isa. 58:13. A Psalmist, perhaps David in his flight from Absalom, laments that he is deprived of joining on that day, or on one of the festival days, which, as we have seen, partook of the Sabbatic character, with those who in the house of God raise the voice of joy and praise. Psa. 42:4. On one of the Sabbatic holy days, shortly before the Sabbath was reinstated with new strictness after the return from captivity, Nehemiah and Ezra commanded

rejoicing, saying, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The Mosaic Sabbath, positive and ceremonial ordinance as it was, still embodied the true Sabbath. It was not a burden but a blessing.

Such rare hints as we possess of the history of the Sabbath in Israel are sufficient to convince us that its due and full observance was, as in the case of all the religious institutions of the people, a matter of growth. Even in the wilderness their carelessness in this regard was one of the reasons for the long national hermitage of forty years. In the unsettled days of the Judges the Sabbath is not once mentioned. What we know of the prevalence of idolatry among the people, and their frequent bondage to Canaanitish kings, is enough to indicate how little the day was regarded. With the closer organization and more settled polity of the kingdom the Sabbath seems to have revived. Under David its prevalence is indicated in the order of alternation of the gate-keepers of the tabernacle. 1 Chr. 9:22-25. The same fact regulated the succession of the priestly courses. 1 Chr. 24:19; 2 Chr. 8:14; Luke 1:8. In the days of Joash we find the same arrangement employed to save the life of the young king from the vicious Athaliah. 2 Kin. 11:5-9; 2 Chr. 23:4-8. The Mosaic directions for special sacrifices on the Sab-

bath were repeated by David and Solomon and by Hezekiah. 1 Chr. 23:31; 2 Chr. 2:4; 8:13; 31:3.

But during these long years of alternate apostasy and repentance the Sabbath did not receive its full due honor from Israel. It was for the most part either disused or misused throughout this whole period. Some of the most earnest exhortations of the greater prophets are towards the better sanctification of the seventh day. They used the day as a special time of religious teaching. 2 Kin. 4:23. They denounced its profanation in terrible declarations of the divine judgments against its violators, and uttered the most persuasive prophecies of the national glory that would follow its observance. The lyric splendor of Isaiah, the pathetic entreaty of Jeremiah, and the elaborate imagery of Ezekiel, all lent their aid to press upon a backslidden people the claims of the covenant sign between them and the Almighty. The bitter punishment of dispersion and captivity which the two kingdoms underwent is declared to have been in retribution for pollution of the Sabbath. The moral intensity of this great prophetic period is the prelude to that strict legalism which followed the return of Judah from captivity, in which the remnant of Israel became more really, perhaps, than ever before the nation of the law.

The Jews who returned from Babylon were of the choicest blood of the nation. All others, to great extent, had been merged with the idolatrous peoples with whom they had mingled. The national enthusiasm for righteousness, so long confined and corrupted by contact with the outer world, now burst forth and bore its most brilliant blossoms and fairest fruitage. It was one of the first cares of Nehemiah to establish a holy Sabbath. On that day he strictly interdicted all buying and selling, closed the gates of Jerusalem, and forbade all agricultural or other labor. He also revived the institution of the Sabbath year. He reminds the people, as he gives these orders, of the evil brought upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath. Neh. 10:31; 13:15-22. And this, which was in some degree a new institution of the Sabbath, was based on the creation, the deliverance from Egypt, and the Decalogue. Neh. 9:6, 14, 38; 10:31.

The circumstance which doubtless had greatest influence in securing the respect which was certainly accorded to the institution before the Christian era, was the establishment of the synagogue worship and instruction, probably by Ezra the scribe. This, by securing public religious services in every locality, served to deeply impress this duty upon the Jewish people, as well as

to create the spirit of Sabbath observance among them. It was the deepening intensity of the legal feeling thus induced which at last produced the Rabbinical system and Sabbath, with which Jesus placed himself in such direct antagonism.

An institution thus entwined with all the customs and polity of the nation could not be easily given up. No act of tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes was more bitterly resented by Judæa than that he turned "her Sabbaths into reproach," and gave orders "that they should profane the Sabbaths and festival days." 1 Macc. 1:39-45. The Maccabean insurrection was, as has been eloquently said by a Jewish orator, "the first instance of a whole people rising up, in the majesty of their righteous scorn, to vindicate their rights of conscience and of faith." The Sabbath has the high honor of being a principal point of conscience contended for in that great death-grapple of a higher faith with a decaying paganism. A singular instance of the even superstitious reverence for the day which existed at this time is the refusal of some of the refugees from the Antiochian persecution to even resist an attack made upon them on the Sabbath, and their consequent slaughter. The Maccabees, possibly remembering that one of the seven days of the besieging of Jericho must have been a Sabbath, "decreed,

saying, Whoever will come to make battle with us on the Sabbath day, we will fight against him; neither will we die all, as our brethren who were murdered in the secret places." 1 Macc. 2:31-41. Yet they did not sufficiently relax the stringency with which the day was observed to undertake offensive military operations on that day. On one occasion they suspended the pursuit of a fleeing enemy because of the on-coming Sabbath, and, having gathered together their spoils, "they occupied themselves about the Sabbath, yielding exceeding praise and thanks to the Lord, who had preserved them unto that day, which was the beginning of mercy distilling upon them." 2 Macc. 8:24-27. This excessive scrupulousness was taken advantage of by Pompey when he besieged Jerusalem. He occupied the Sabbath in undisturbed preparations for assault on the following day. It was largely through the advantage thus gained that he was able at length to capture the city.\*

The strictness with which the Jews kept the day is attested by heathen writers also, generally in the way of ridicule and censure. Tacitus says that "the Hebrews find leisure agreeable on the seventh day because it put an end to work, and they also, by the allurements of indolence, give

\* Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," XIV. 43.

the seventh year to laziness.”\* Juvenal satirically says,

“Each seventh day their bigot sires  
Rescind from all that social life requires.”†

Seneca censures the Jews for wasting in idleness the seventh part of life.‡ In similar terms of ridicule or denunciation Ovid, Martial, Petronius, and others, give evidence to the vitality of the institution in the later period of Jewish history. Indeed, the Jews were so far able to guard its sanctity, even under Roman rule, as to obtain a decree from Augustus that Jews should be exempt from all judicial proceedings on the Sabbath day.§ There is not wanting evidence that many of the Romans themselves, as well as Greeks, had already begun to keep the day in some manner. Horace observes concerning the Sabbath,

“This is the Jews’ high feast, and I suspect  
You ’d hardly like to spurn that holy sect.”||

Juvenal declares, in the Satire quoted above, that many who had become Jews began by observing the Sabbath. ¶

This brief outline of the history of the Jewish

\* “History,” V. 5. † “Satires,” XIV. 105.

‡ Augustine, “City of God,” IV. 11.

§ Josephus, “Antiquities,” XVI. 2, 3.

|| “Satire” 9.

¶ See also Josephus, “Against Apion,” the “Roman History of Dion Cassius,” and “Renan’s Lectures on Judaism.”



institution shows how it had gradually increased in influence and finally culminated in the excessively formal Sabbath of Rabbinism.

After the Captivity that class of Jewish teachers known as the scribes came into prominence. Their first task was the critical one of transcribing and preserving the sacred text of the Scriptures. They became naturally the teachers of the law of which they had been constituted guardians. For what they regarded as the better observance of the old precepts, they added new injunctions by way of building what they called "fences" about the law. And thus grew up that body of oral legislation known as the Mishna, which afterwards was the core of that wilderness of philosophy, fancy, and folly, the Jewish Talmud. Not uncommonly this oral tradition was set above the written law in its authority. It was fabled that it had been delivered with the text of the Decalogue to Moses on Mount Sinai. Such sayings as these abound: "The text of Scripture is like water, and the Mishna like wine." "The words of the scribes are lovely above the words of the law." Not undeserved was the condemnation uttered by Jesus when he accused the scribes of "making the Word of God of none effect through your traditions."

The Mishnic teachings devote, in the *Soder*

*Mo'ed*, or order of festivals, no less than thirty-four chapters exclusively to the subject of the Sabbath, besides numerous precepts on the same topic scattered broadcast through the Talmud. Nothing is left of it but a punctilious outward observance. Its duties are discussed with the utmost minuteness of detail and the subtlest refinements of casuistry. Rules as to what kind of knots could be tied on the Sabbath, what kind of sandals and other garments might be worn, what food should be eaten, and what burdens borne, fill these curious pages. Hillel and Shammai gravely discuss whether an egg which a hen has laid on the Sabbath may be used, and finally decide that it may be if the hen is kept only for the express purpose of laying eggs! Two letters could not be written; even a needle could not be carried in the pocket, for the reason that it is a working-tool; an emetic must not be administered, or a bone be set on that day. The Talmud teaches that the Sabbath extends throughout the universe, and, consequently, the lost in hell have on that day respite from their torments.

As was perfectly natural, such rigidity led to hypocritical evasions. The Sabbath-day's journey, which is not prescribed in the law of Moses at all, but is a Rabbinical precept, was two thousand cubits, about three-quarters of a mile. But

this means, say the scribes, that distance from one's dwelling. Now a man's dwelling is where his food is; consequently, he has only to place a piece of meat two thousand cubits from his house on the day before, and that, by legal fiction extending his dwelling to such a point, will give the right to double the length of the Sabbath-day's journey. Put chains across the two ends of a street, and you make it a single dwelling. By such sophistries as these the scribes were able, on occasion, to nullify the whole law.

There are not wanting more liberal views of the Sabbath in the Talmud. It says, "The Sabbath is for you, and you are not for the Sabbath," an aphorism which bears a striking resemblance to the saying of Jesus recorded by Mark (2 : 27). For the sake of an infant it might be broken, "for the babe will keep many a Sabbath yet for the one that was broken for it." Nor was the Rabbinical Sabbath a day of gloom. Such maxims as these abound: "Meet the Sabbath with a lively hunger;" "Put on all thy cheerfulness, and say nothing but what is provocative of gladness and good feeling." One rule is still obeyed to a large extent in these later days: "Walk leisurely, for the law requires it, as it also does *longer sleep in the morning*." A very high Jewish authority indignantly says, "We cannot refrain from enter-

ing a protest against the vulgar notion of the 'Jewish Sabbath' being a thing of grim austerity. It was precisely the contrary, a 'day of joy and delight,' a 'feast' day, honored by fine garments, by the best cheer, by wine, lights, spice, and other joys of preëminently bodily import; and the highest expression of the feeling of self-reliance and independence is contained in the adage, 'Rather live on your Sabbath as you would on a week-day than be dependent on others.'\*

Nevertheless, in spite of this broader and more indulgent view, the multiplication of rules could not fail to create a real slavery of will. Only the acute priests and Rabbins knew how to avail themselves of these indulgences, while to the less subtle multitude the Sabbath became a burden rather than a delight. Indeed, the mission of Israel as the nation of the law had been fully accomplished. The importance of the moral law to secure the obedience it commanded had been fully demonstrated, while its teaching power was quite exhausted. Amid the general failure to feel its inward life and to realize its spiritual essence, its letter was enthroned above its spirit, and formal observances were substituted for real righteousness. This was true not only of the Sabbath,

\* Emanuel Deutsch, Lectures on "The Talmud," in "Literary Remains," p. 30.

but of all the commands of the law. Its loftier sense was hidden and lost beneath the thick incrustation of petty mechanical requirements with which it was overlaid.

The time was fully come for a change. That change could take place only by the sweeping away of Rabbinical tradition, by bringing forth again the inner reason and significance of the abiding Sabbath, and by such a breaking of connection with the letter of the Sabbath law as would for ever hedge up the way to any return to Pharisaic ritualism. The time was come for the establishment of that noblest and truest earthly form of the Sabbatic institution, the Lord's day, or the Christian Sabbath, which fully answers all the demands of the moral law, and, by breaking loose from the particular day observed as the Jewish Sabbath, avoids many of the dangers of legalism.

Israel had not attained true rest. Not Moses nor Joshua nor David nor Nehemiah was able to secure it for them. (Hebrews, third and fourth chapters.) The true Sabbatism of faith awaited "another day" as its present expression and promise of future perfection. That day is the Lord's day, the day of the accomplished redemption of man and promised redemption of the world.



PART III.

§ABBATH OF REDEMPTION.





THE  
SABBATH OF REDEMPTION.

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CHAPTER I.

TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST.

“These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” REV. 3: 17.

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” JOHN 6: 63.

THE Incarnation is the central fact of the world's history. All the roads of the centuries lead to and from it. It is the key to every event in history and all right thinking in philosophy. Jesus being thus the culmination of the moral order of the world, his appearance becomes the turning-point in the course of history. Jesus Christ came to put an end to the old order of things. The forms, ceremonies, and customs of the past, as they pass into the testing crucible of his method and teaching, are either destroyed or come forth changed and set in a new light and

clothed with new meanings. How does the Sabbath endure the ordeal to which his mission submits every system and ordinance of the ancient world?

Jesus, like every true reformer, was no mere iconoclast. It was not his purpose simply to tear down the building of the ages; his mission was constructive rather. He came to interpret the past, to bring forth the true meanings of its systems of worship, government, and culture. He says, in most explicit terms, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Matt. 5:17. His relation to the whole providential history of the past was not one of destruction, but of consummation. "Christ is the end of the law," not negatively, that its provisions may be ignored, but positively, "for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. 10:4. He fulfils the ceremonial law by realizing its typical significations in his own redemptive work, and by disclosing its substance freed from the obligation of the shadow; he fulfils the moral law by his perfect conformity to it, and by giving it new sanction, in revealing its inward meaning, and thus investing it with a holier strictness, and by imparting the vital motive of obedience by which alone its spiritual essence can be regarded. The shadowy forms of ceremo-

nialism vanish for ever in the blaze of light given by the divine reality they typified; but in that radiance the moral law they hid as well as guarded stands out more clearly in all its heaven-born beauty. Such is the true relation of Jesus Christ to the Hebrew code as revealed by his own testimony.

It ought not to be difficult to apply these principles to the Sabbath. As already shown, the Sabbath contained moral elements; it belonged not solely to Israel, but was sanctioned by the primitive revelation to the race, being the first article in the law of the beginning; it was a part of that sublime code which by the mouth of the Eternal himself was spoken to his chosen people from the mountain of God; its violation had been surrounded in the Mosaic legislation and in the prophetic instructions with penalties and its observance with blessings such as could hardly be attached to a simple institution of ritual. The abiding Sabbath, belonging to the moral law, is therefore not repealed or cancelled by Jesus, but rather confirmed with new uses, loftier meanings, and holier objects. The ceremonial Sabbath is indeed done away, but the moral Sabbath abides by the authority of the Sabbath's Lord.

Besides this statement of his relation to the law in general, Christ has given special intima-

tions of his will concerning the Sabbath. And here we must expect nothing explicit. It is not the method of Jesus to give minute directions or go into detail on any subject. His teachings are in large outline; they are the announcement of principles which are capable of wide application not only to the subject in hand, but also to all similar questions that may be proposed. He has given, not the grown harvest of doctrine, but the living germs with which all gardens and fields of thought may be sown, and which will unfold into flowers of moral beauty and waving forests of spiritual truth. Such is the method of Jesus in general, and such is his treatment of the question of the Sabbath day.

The teachings of Jesus Christ concerning the Sabbath naturally divide themselves into two parts: first, his condemnation of the Rabbinical perversions of its true end, and consequently of the ceremonial Sabbath in general; and, secondly, his declaration of a higher ground for the Sabbath than Judaism furnished, and his consequent confirmation of the eternal moral essence of the Sabbatic law.

1. *Jesus denounces the false strictness of the Jewish Sabbath.*

After the Captivity, as has been seen, the Jewish people entered upon a new national life. The

discipline of national sorrows was not lost on them, and henceforth they devoted themselves with a new-found zeal to the law and ritual of their religion. The Mosaic institutions took on a sharper definition and a stricter interpretation. But this new fervent loyalty to the law ended, as all excessive legalism always will, in the enthronement of the letter above the spirit and in a highly developed ceremonial system at the expense of a real righteousness.

Such absurd questions as whether it would not be a kind of hunting to kill a flea on the Sabbath were gravely argued with a micrologic zeal for the very letter of the law. A whole body of traditional lore in the shape of a developed comment on the law had grown up, giving the most minute directions for the observance of its every article. To this system Jesus placed himself in direct antagonism. "Ye make the word of God of none effect through your tradition." Mark 7:13. His most terrible denunciations were reserved for this hypocritical blindness which would not see the large outline of spiritual duty and vital morality involved in the commandments of God, but magnified every petty formal observance which could obscure or seemingly excuse actual disobedience.

The occasion could not long be delayed in

which he would come into collision with the perverted conception of the Sabbath. The Rabbins had said, "Grass must not be walked upon on the Sabbath day, for that would be a sort of threshing." But the disciples of Christ, walking through the fields on the Sabbath, satisfied their hunger by rubbing out the grain between their hands and eating it. Matt. 12:1. Jesus meets the charge of Sabbath-breaking by citing the example of David in eating the show-bread, in proof that human necessity is a higher law than physical rest, which is only the negative side of the Sabbath law, and that the Sabbath, to exist, must maintain its harmony with the other laws of that God who "will have mercy, and not sacrifice." The Sabbath is not to be man's burden, but delight; it is made ~~for man and for his good.~~ It is not to become a rigid mould to which he must fit himself, but must be adapted to his needs, both physical and spiritual. The Jewish tradition had declared that the art of healing was not to be exercised on the Sabbath day unless absolutely necessary for the preservation of life. Jesus on the Sabbath restores the man with the withered hand, declaring that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath; and thereby he has taught that nothing can be holier than mercy, and that the holy day is not violated, but sanctified, by holy

deeds. To the same end are all the other cases of healing on the Sabbath used by the Saviour.\*

There is not in all this any hint of the abolition of the Sabbath, or release from its obligations. The words of Jesus become meaningless when they are applied to anything but the abuses and perversions of its purposes by the Rabbinical schools. Had he desired to abolish it altogether, nothing would have been easier than to do so in terms. His words are everywhere framed with the utmost care, and strictly guarded against any construction which would involve a denial of the real sacredness of the day blessed by the

\* That Jesus did not disregard Jewish feeling in regard to the Jewish Sabbath, when the sentiment was not opposed to the true law of God, is shown by his injunction to his disciples with regard to their conduct in respect to the impending doom of Judæa. "Pray ye," he says, "that your flight be not in the winter, *neither on the Sabbath day.*" Matt. 24:20. In that coming desolation there was certainty of sufficient gloom without the added difficulties of a winter journey such as storm and swollen water-courses, or the loss of Sabbath rest and consolation. There is probably a reference to the fact that scruple in regard to exceeding the "Sabbath day's journey," limited by the scribes to 2,000 cubits, might act as a check on Jewish Christians' escape; beside which, closed city gates might materially impede their progress. It is possible, also, that we should regard the Sabbath of Israel as binding on Jews to some extent until the complete breaking up of their national polity by the destruction of Jerusalem with its temple, and the consequent cessation of the whole sacrificial and ceremonial system.

Creator and sanctioned by the moral law. The whole force of the language which he uses lies in the fact that he is opposing the transient human element in the institution, and opposing it in the interests of the deeper significance which belongs to that in it which is permanent and divine. He does not "make void the law," but establishes it rather, by liberating the holy ordinance from the material bondage imposed upon it by men; he does not destroy it, but gives it new life by tearing away the beggarly elements of a passing human economy with which it had become entwined, and which could only bring decay and death to the precious reality which they inclosed. It is to be noticed that Jesus nowhere takes the trouble to purify any merely ceremonial institution from Rabbinical glosses. That he does so with regard to the Sabbath is a positive proof that there was in it something which he intended should endure us a part of the order in human society which he established.

The "fence" that the Jewish masters built to guard the law became too soon a wall to hide it. Jesus tore away the surrounding walls of ceremony and form only that the living truth might appear to man. Nothing but antinomian blindness can otherwise interpret his words. A frantic hyper-spiritualism and an undisciplined mys-



ticism may join hands with a supercilious rationalism in misjudgment of his spirit and method. A sane interpretation of his words, in the light of the facts and in their historic setting, reveals that his opposition to the Jewish Sabbath was inspired by his allegiance to that abiding Sabbath which existed before Judaism and should survive its downfall. This leads the way to the second proposition.

2. *Jesus confirms the Sabbath on its spiritual basis.*

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath ; therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” Mark 2 : 27, 28. Such is the remarkable declaration of our Saviour, and in so declaring, he not only dated back the origin of the day before the giving of the law to Israel, but asserted his power and implied his purpose to enlarge its significance and bequeath it in a worthier form to the whole world. Thus he at once rid it of all the false restrictions of Judaism, and, establishing it upon its primitive foundations, he brought forth its higher reason in the assertion of its relation to the well-being of man.

“The Sabbath was made for man :” not for the Jew only, but for the whole race of mankind ; not for one age alone, but for man universally,

under every circumstance of time and place. By this declaration Christ has freed the Sabbath from all local and temporal reference, and revealed its existence and authority as coextensive with the entire race of man. Because man everywhere and always needs a Sabbath, therefore everywhere and always will he know the blessing and be under the obligation of that Sabbath which was given at the beginning with reference to the higher necessities of his nature.

“The Sabbath was made for man:” it is certainly fair to infer from this language that it was contemporaneous with man, made for him when he was made. When the temple of nature had been completed, with its doming skies and buttressing mountains, with its organ music of whispering winds and roaring billows, then was placed at its sacred altar man, the priest as well as king of nature; and then God “blessed and sanctified” a day on which he should, in special manner, offer the incense of praise and thanksgiving. A day of worship was the first gift offered to a being capable of worship. Not to the physical realm of things does the rest-day come with its highest meanings, although even those animals which are associated with man shall know the blessedness of its rest; it is for man the spiritual being, made in the image of his Maker,

made to trust, to adore, and to love, that the Sabbath is made. He alone can realize that diviner rest of the spirit which has as its pattern the spiritual repose of God after his work of creation. As the witness and teacher of his supernatural relations and being, the Sabbath was made for man: made, that by its aid and influence he might transcend his earthly life and assert his loftier nature and destiny.

The Sabbath being "made for man," it is not so much by the restraint of the body as by the freedom of the spirit that its obligation is fulfilled; it is not a chain to bind him, but a liberating angel that opens the door of his prison-house, and gives him the freedom of those spiritual palaces of light whose stately, shining walls arise unseen beside our huts of clay. "Man was not made for the Sabbath," to work the treadmill of the burdensome requirements with which human traditions had surrounded it; but because man's whole nature needed the Sabbath, therefore it was given to be a perennial spring of gladness, the uplifter of his life, and the enfranchisement of his soul.

The phrase "made for man" has suggestive reaches beyond even these high meanings. Not only the bending heavens with their burning lights, the fair earth with its mountains, valleys,

and plains, the waving forests and the fruitful fields, the subtle forces of the air and the hidden treasures of the mines—not only were these made for that being in whom nature consummated its meaning by coming to self-consciousness; but time brought its gift of days as well: six robed in russet garb of service, but one in queenly raiment clad, with shining fingers pointing the way upward and onward to that eternity of bliss of which it is the God-blessed symbol set in time. It is a part of the provision made for man at the creation, as needful for him as the buoyant air, the sparkling water, or the bountiful soil.

“The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” This is an assertion by our Lord of his right to make such modifications in the law of the Sabbath, and give it such new adjustments as should to him seem best for the religious culture of the race. As Lord of the Sabbath, he doubtless had the power to set it entirely aside—a power which certainly he has nowhere exercised, either by himself or through his apostles. He had the right to change its day and alter or add to its meanings—a right which he has exercised in giving us the Lord’s day, the Christian Sabbath, and in making it a monument of redemption as well as of creation and providence. Because he is “Lord of the Sabbath,” we can

rightly call the Sabbath the Lord's day, and the Lord's day our Sabbath. That which he has asserted that he had the power to do, we have the right to assume he has done, and we have, moreover, the right to infer that the change which came over the Sabbatic institutions in the early Christian centuries was not without his will, but by his authority and in fulfilment of his purpose.

In another remarkable instance Jesus spake words which bring out fully the positive side of the Sabbatic ordinance. He had just healed the sick man at Bethesda, and being charged with desecration of the Sabbath, he replied, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." John 5:17. The day is not rendered sacred by inactivity; it is made holy by being consecrated to holy purposes. There is not in this any denial of the seventh-day rest of God after his work of creation; rather does our Lord point out that rest with God, and indeed all true spiritual rest, is not merely a cessation of effort, but chiefly a change of activities. The Father, indeed, rested from the physical work of creation, but it was only to enter upon his Sabbath employment of providence, in governing and upholding his creatures, and later of redemption, "the work of salvation and of the moral education of the human

race. That divine labor had for its very basis the cessation from creative labor in nature."\* For this interpretation of the Father's work as referring to his unresting activity for human salvation, as well as to the sustaining and governing of the world, there is the very highest exegetical authority.† Without entering upon the question of the method of observance of the Sabbath, it follows clearly, in the light of this passage, that it chiefly consists in a change from ordinary worldly labor and business to spiritual activity. It is a day of rest by being a day of worship. When it is not used for worship, it soon ceases to afford any real repose. By the Sabbath man is linked to his Father in heaven; and to him, as to the Creator, true rest is found in the change from creative toil to redemptive and merciful tasks. By observance of the Sabbath he asserts his spiritual origin, nature, and destiny. As in six days of labor he follows the Creator on his path of material effort, so in the seventh day he holds communion with the Father of his spirit in the sacred tasks of holy aspiration and in benevolent duties. The law of worship is higher than the law of rest, and is its guardian and security; while the law of love is higher than

\* Godet, "Commentaire Sur l'Evangile de Saint Jean."

† See Meyer's "Commentary" *in loco*.

either, being based in the essential moral nature of Deity. The Sabbath is, therefore, never so much or so truly the Sabbath as when it is a day of love. In this passage, again, Jesus has connected the Sabbath with the beginning of the world; and in opposing the narrow conception of his Jewish adversaries, he strips it of the veil of ceremony and reveals its inward spirit and life as existing in the nature of God and as a pattern for the imitation of man.

In other ways Jesus enforces the idea that the Sabbath is not a day of mere inactivity, but is rightfully used for religious employments. He reminds his accusers that by order of the law itself the priests in the temple violate the strict law of rest on the Sabbath by preparation of the double sacrifices and the fresh show-bread required on that day, Matt. 12:5, and that the sacred rite of circumcision was everywhere performed on the Sabbath rather than deferred beyond the eighth day of legal requirement. John 7:22, 23. With regard to circumcision, indeed, he reminds them that it antedated Moses,\* and therefore is of higher authority than any other requirement of their religious ritual, and consequently it takes precedence of the ceremonial Sabbath, and is not in discord with that older

\* See Meyer on this passage.

law of the Sabbath which is not violated, but obeyed, by religious acts.

In all these teachings, Jesus, by striking at Rabbinical literalism and exaggerated ritualism in Sabbath observance, and by referring the Sabbath to its original foundation and setting forth its spiritual essence, was preparing the way for that religious revelation which, in the process of years, has produced the Christian Sabbath. More subtly than Moses, yet as really as the law-giver in the wilderness, he was instituting a new Sabbath. Such is the real effect of the living words of our great Teacher. He has confirmed for ever on the basis of its primitive enactment, with changed position in time and new richness of meanings, the law of the abiding Sabbath.



## CHAPTER II.

## APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY.

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

MATT. 28: 20.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.”

ACTS 2: 42.

“Christ said not to his first conventicle,  
‘Go forth and preach impostures to the world,’  
But gave them truth to build on; and the sound  
Was mighty on their lips; nor needed they,  
Beside the gospel, other spear or shield  
To aid them in their warfare for the faith.”

DANTE.

JESUS CHRIST did not personally carry out his own purposes into organized forms. His public ministry lasted but a little more than three years. In that brief time he occupied himself, not in founding institutions, nor in writing a code of morals and doctrine, but in instructing the twelve men who were to be the authorized interpreters of his will and mission to the world. To them he gave full authority for that work, including absolute power both of teaching and administration. He promised for their guidance the presence and assistance of the Spirit of God.

Every word they have spoken to the church, and every institution they have founded, are therefore backed by his sovereignty, and come to us with the same binding force of obligation as if delivered directly by himself. So much at least is implied in the many promises and injunctions given to them before his ascension. On this divine commission of the apostles is based the doctrine of their inspiration. This fact clothes the teachings of the New Testament outside of the words of Jesus with an authority like that with which those are invested.

And we find full harmony between the words of our Lord and apostolic teaching and usage. There is, however, this difference: the apostle Paul is more positive and sweeping in his condemnation of the ceremonial Sabbath, going to the length of declaring the Jewish institution not binding upon Christians. The reason of this is, undoubtedly, to be found in the fact that the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles had intensified the struggle with Jewish ritualism. The battle for soul-liberty had to be fought out, and in the course of it hard blows were struck at the Sabbath so far as it was connected with the "beggarly elements" of a carnal and temporal economy. And this was the less likely to be misconstrued as applying to the eternal law of the Sab-

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bath itself, because already, as will be shown hereafter, the "first day of the week," marked by Christ's resurrection "the Lord's day," had become of common observance and was gradually succeeding to its proper inheritance of the inward meaning of the abiding Sabbath delivered by the Creator and confirmed by the Redeemer.

1. *The Jewish Sabbath is definitely abolished by apostolic authority.*

There seems to have been a strenuous effort made to impose on Gentile converts to Christianity certain Jewish observances—preëminently circumcision, the distinction of meats as clean and unclean, and the keeping of festivals. This attempt was earnestly and successfully resisted by the apostles. The whole temple ritual and all the external ordinances of Judaism were but types of Christ and his offices. In him they were fulfilled, and with that realization of their substance these shadows were to pass away. Sacrificial fires, holy rites, and religious festivals, all found their consummation in the life and death of Christ. His body is the true temple, he is the eternal priest, and his death the one perpetual sacrifice. The Christian's circumcision is a "circumcision made without hands," Col. 2:11; to him "remains a Sabbath-keeping," Heb. 4:9, which is a rest from sin and in faith, ceasing from the works

of the law as a ground of justification. No wonder that the apostles could so little tolerate the proposed continuance of the bondage from which Christ had set them free. Gal. 5 : 1. Had he not taken away "the handwriting of ordinances" against them and "nailed it to his cross"? Col. 2 : 14. All the splendid but burdensome forms of Hebrew worship had meaning only as they centred in him, and with him they died, not to be raised with him, for he rose "in the spirit." 1 Pet. 3 : 18 ; Rom. 1 : 4. To continue these ordinances would be more than, in Canon Farrar's phrase, "to hold up superfluous candles to the sun;" it would be, in very fact, to deny the Lord and his work.\* "Christ is become of none effect to you, whosoever of you would be justified by the law." Gal. 5 : 4. The wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has been broken down and abolished in the flesh of Christ. Eph. 2 : 14, 15. The Christian believer is so identified with his Saviour that he has died with him, and so has been released from those "rudiments of the world," Col. 2 : 20, embodied in the Mosaic ritual. It is impossible to overstate the sense of freedom which must have

\* It would be well for those Christians who are endeavoring to reinstate the Jewish Sabbath to take this reflection to heart. Let us beware lest, by preserving the type, we cancel in thought the work of redemption. He who prefers to be under the law in any measure has, in so far, rejected grace.

come to the early church with regard to the ordinances of the ceremonial law, and which especially glows in the fearless words of the great apostle to the Gentiles. Salvation in Christ implied the breaking of legal shackles which had endured for ages. These things had served their purpose, but now they must vanish in the blaze of that supreme reality which they had only pre-figured. ✓

With the ceremonial system vanished the Jewish Sabbath. It had only a local and temporal meaning. It commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage and foreshadowed a greater deliverance. About it had gathered observances, penalties, rules, and traditions which were only the accidents of its existence. The promised Deliverer at last had come, bringing to the weary and heavy-laden the soul-rest which the Sabbath of Israel had prophesied, and now it must be cast off as a worn-out garment. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy [feast] day, or a new moon, or a Sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is of Christ." Col. 2 : 16, 17. This passage with one stroke sweeps away the whole list of Jewish festivals and declares them to be no longer obligatory upon the Christian conscience. The whole passage with its con-

text forbids the explanation that Paul was only attacking a particular manner of observing the day; and that he is not referring to other sacred days is evident from the fact that they are mentioned in the same passage under other heads. The moral requirement of a day of worship is not in question here; but it is the special institution of the particular day, with its particular meanings as related to Hebrew history, and its peculiar observances, which is done away in Christ. Indeed, the letter of the law must be abolished if the true spirit of it, older than Hebrew history and not ending with the Mosaic ritual, is to live at all. Some dawn of the Lord's day is in the sky as we read these words in the light of the whole revelation of God.

There are two other passages in the writings of Paul which bear directly on this point. The first is Gal. 4:10: "Ye observe days and months, and times [seasons] and years." The apostle here condemns the keeping of the stated holy days of the Jews, and strikes at all that externalism which is enslaved to any portion of space or any moment of time. There are no little pieces of glorified duration which have in themselves any peculiar sanctity. The believer should be delivered from the bondage of any such superstition. Surely the advocates of a seventh-day Sabbath in these later

years have not felt the full force of that evangelical freedom which Paul enjoyed and preached. It must not be supposed, however, that the apostle was opposing the right and liberty of the church to appoint special periods of time for special and separate duties; for to these very churches of Galatia he first gave the command which he reaffirms to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 16:1, 2, to appropriate the first day of the week to the benevolent contributions of the church. The whole force of his denunciation of the observance of "times and seasons" is directed against not the special moral and religious use of particular portions of time, but the legalistic spirit which would cling to the Jewish festivals and fasts as a means of salvation, and which was a hindrance to faith in Christ. Gal. 5:1-14.

Another passage to the same effect is Romans 14:5, 6: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."\* This does not

\* The latter clause of this text, "and he that regardeth not the day," etc., is undoubtedly an interpolation. The revision of 1881 has very properly omitted it. This does not change in any way the use made of it above, although it spoils many a zealous anti-Sabbatarian argument. An in-

preclude the proper consecration of one day in seven to holy uses; but it does declare the freedom of the Christian from the requirements of the Mosaic dispensation. It is a declaration of evangelical independence, and not a Nihilistic abolition of all law. In declaring the liberty of the church in the matter of meats and drinks, he does not thereby abolish eating and drinking, but rather establishes those cheerful duties on a broader and more spiritual basis; so in asserting Christian freedom from the "day," he has not nullified the abiding law of the Sabbath, but rather given it a new life in the spirit.

Such is the relation of apostolic teaching to the Jewish Sabbath. The yoke of the fathers, with its crushing weight of sacerdotal requirement, was cast off. The galling fetters of tradition were broken, and for ever was the infant church delivered from "statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." Ezek. 20:25. But the inspired caution with which this was done must be marked as well. So fully has the language been guarded by the Holy Spirit that the strictest interpretation cannot thereby justify Sabbath violation; nor, on

stance may be found in the dangerous sermon of F. W. Robertson on this text which is wholly built up on the spurious passage in question.



the other hand, can the stoutest conservatism rescue the Jewish Sabbath from its destructive effects. Paul's words, while more radical than those of Jesus, as was required by the different characters of their contest, only carry out the Lord's idea. By striking down the form they have exalted the spirit. They have cleared the way for a true Sabbath after the creative pattern, but enriched by redemptive ideas.

2. *The apostles, by confirming the moral law, have enforced the obligation of the abiding Sabbath.*

It is sometimes urged that the gospel dispensation has done away with the obligation of the whole law; that we are not under the law, but under grace. It has already been shown that Christ fulfils the moral law in a very different manner from that of his fulfilment of the ceremonial law: the latter he embodies in his own offices, and so annuls it; but the former he makes honorable through his perfect obedience. And this is the substance of the apostolic teaching. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Rom. 3:31. The very object of redemption in Christ was that the "righteousness of the law should be fulfilled in us." Rom. 8:4. By positive declarations such as these, by minute moral injunctions to the churches under their care, the apostles of

Jesus Christ, as he had done in the Sermon on the Mount, reënacted for the church the whole Decalogue in its universal meanings. And in this reënactment it does not mean less, but more. The law of chastity means inner purity as well as freedom from bodily defilement; the law against murder implies loving relations with all mankind, as well as guiltlessness of the bloody deed; so the law of the Sabbath demands, under the gospel, not simple physical inaction, but to be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

So far, therefore, from the moral law being ignored or cancelled by apostolic teaching, it is endowed with a larger significance. By the great generalization of Jesus, the moral law was summed up in love to God and man, and thus it becomes more than an outward rule; it is an inner inspiration. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," exclaims Paul, Rom. 13:10; and so far from this making the law less obligatory, love is to be regarded as an always-binding, never-paid debt. "Owe no man anything but to love one another." Rom. 13:8. The law does not lose, but gain, in sanctity and authority when it is thus translated into the forms of life. The Father's rule does not lose its authority because the motive of obedience is changed from fear to love; rather, with increasing love and knowl-

edge, does the child feel all the stronger the sweet constraint of the paternal will. Obedience is not less obligatory because it brings no bondage. "Ought" coexists with "love to," as surely as with "must." The law which is "holy and just and good" cannot be set aside. The difference between legalism and evangelical freedom consists chiefly in this: that obedience, impossible before, is made possible through the inward power of a new motive. The loyal devotion of a child takes the place of the coerced conformity of a servant. That the terror of the commandment has been transformed into a benediction does not relax the obligation, but intensifies it. The moral law is glorified, and not repealed, by the new dispensation.

It has already been shown that the Sabbath is a part of the moral law; it has the mark of universality as coexistent with man; it embodies a spiritual significance; it has a reasonable basis in the physical, mental, and moral needs of man; it was incorporated in the Decalogue, the outline of moral law given to Israel; it was enforced by such threatened penalties for violation and promised blessings for observance as could not have been attached to a merely ceremonial ordinance; and Jesus confirmed these historical and rational proofs by his own example and teachings.

Being, therefore, a part of the moral law, it is established as an apostolic institution by every word and phrase in which the apostles assert that law to be still binding on men. The proof is as complete as the nature of the case admits.

It is not difficult to account for the complete silence of the New Testament so far as any explicit command for the Sabbath or definite rules for its observance are concerned. No argument against the Sabbath can be based on the absence of such positive regulations. The conditions under which the early Christian church existed were not favorable for their announcement. Although the choicest blessings of the day come to the individual life, yet its perfect observance is a social matter and depends on social arrangements. The early church, a struggling minority composed of the poorest people, could not have instituted the Christian Sabbath in its full force of meaning. The ruling influences of government and society were against them. The Christian slave could not refuse to work for his heathen master even on the Lord's day. There were still the conservative tendencies of Jewish Christianity to be overcome. Nothing more, however, was needed than the authority of the creative ordinance as announced by inspiration, the sanction of the Decalogue, and the confirmation of

the moral content of the law by Jesus Christ, to so place the Sabbath in the doctrines and faith of Christianity that, under the administration of the Holy Spirit, as the church gained in numbers and influence, so did the Lord's day gain in sanctity and due observance. As we shall see hereafter, legislation on the question did come at the very moment when it was possible to make it effective. For a considerable time the Jewish Sabbath and the Lord's day coexisted, side by side, in the church; but in its growing life the former naturally faded away with the other effete relics of Judaism which for a time lingered in the church; and the latter more and more superseded the former in embodying the real meanings of the abiding Sabbath of the primal and moral law. This will appear more fully in the history of the Lord's day.

No trace of any authoritative observance of the Jewish Sabbath by Christians, however, can be found in the apostolic writings. If in many cases the apostles preached on that day, it was because their mission was first to Israel, and on that day they found the people assembled in the synagogues. So far as is revealed, the apostolic declaration of its non-requirement was indorsed by apostolic practice. As certainly as historical proof can be adduced for any fact, so certainly is

it demonstrated that the Sabbath of the law was abolished by apostolic authority, in accordance with the developed teachings of Jesus Christ. But although the Sabbath of the law ceased, the law of the Sabbath is abiding; and it is in the highest degree probable that the Lord's day which embodied its spirit was instituted by the immediate authority of the apostles, and therefore by the supreme authority of their Master Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER III.

## ORIGIN OF THE LORD'S DAY.

“Enthronéd in thy sovereign sphere,  
Thou shedd'st thy light on all the year;  
Sundays by thee more glorious break,  
An Easter-day in every week.”

KEBLE.

“Welcome, happy morning! age to age shall say;  
Hell to-day is vanquished; heaven is won to-day!  
Lo, the Dead is living, God for ever more!  
Him, their true Creator, all his works adore.”

VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS.

IN the emphasis which Christ placed on the positive spiritual side of Sabbath observance as distinct from its temporal elements, and in his claim of Lordship over the Sabbath, the foundation was fully laid for its new institution as the Lord's day.

But the ceremonial law could not fully terminate except by its awful fulfilment on Calvary. All the rites and types ordained through Moses had full title of endurance until Christ consummated their meaning and thus ended them for ever. In the death of Christ perished, essentially, the Jewish ritual: the veil of the temple was rent in twain, for temple, sacrifices, and ordinances have no more meaning: all is embodied in

him, and atonement means no more a ritual act performed before the mercy-seat, but has become a mighty fact realized in the Holy of Holies of the highest heavens. With every other symbolical ordinance of Israel, the Sabbath of the law went into the sepulchre with Jesus Christ; but its moral spirit and meaning rose with him, as the Lord's day, on which, after his Sabbath rest in the grave, he rose again, the author of a new spiritual creation.

It is easy to comprehend how the Jewish Sabbath must almost at once have lost its hold on the affections of the disciples. That day of dread and gloom on which their Master lay in the tomb could not be any more to them a "delight." In the most powerful manner possible those feelings of festal gladness and holy joy inseparable from the true idea of the Sabbath were for ever disconnected from the seventh day. It is not surprising that such observance of the seventh day as lingered in the church took the form largely of a fast rather than of a joyous festival.\* It henceforth referred more to the death of the Lord than to the Hebrew institution. And by the most natural revulsion of feeling all that was lost from the seventh day was transferred to the first day of the week, increased by the new thought of redemp-

\* See chapters on "History of the Lord's Day."



tion through a risen Lord. Not only is there nothing wonderful in this transfer, but it would have been truly marvellous had it not taken place. Henceforth not the day of seeming defeat and of the sealed sepulchre, but the day of the manifestation of the Saviour's glorious triumph, is the holy day of the church, its chief day of religious convocation and social worship.

"Love's redeeming work is done;  
Fought the fight, the battle won;"

and because he has finished his work, he has, as did his Father after the first creation, entered into his rest, as the Epistle to the Hebrews testifies. Heb. 4:10. The idea of completion, symbolized by the number seven and embodied in the Sabbath as the memorial of a finished creation, is transferred to the Lord's day, the monument of a finished redemption and the prophecy of the general resurrection which is the consummation of all time's history and the dawn of eternity.

*The Lord's day is the only day which carries in it the meaning and the prophecy of the Sabbath of eternity. It is the abiding Sabbath.*

It was on the "first day of the week" that the Saviour rose. It is remarkable that this phrase, "first day of the week," marks the only case in which any day of the week is distinguished from the rest in Scripture by its number

excepting the seventh day or Jewish Sabbath. Eight times the term is used in the New Testament, five of the instances occurring in connection with the account of the Lord's resurrection. Other days have no distinctive title, save only the sixth day, which is the "Sabbath eve" or "day of preparation." The first day is, therefore, placed in such significant relations with the seventh day as to impress upon it a meaning which cannot be disregarded. There is placed upon it such a distinctive mark that it cannot henceforth be merged with common days. Has not the resurrection of the Sabbath's Lord given a Sabbath's consecration to the Lord's day? Upon it is set the seal of his crowning miracle. No day of the week can claim an equal glory.

After the several appearances of the Saviour on the day of his resurrection there is no recorded appearance until a week later, when the first day is again honored by the Master. John 20:26. The exact mention of the time, which is not usual even with John's exactness, very evidently implies that there already attached a special significance to the "first day of the week" at the time when this Gospel was written. These repeated appearances of Jesus upon the first day doubtless furnished the first suggestion of the practice which very quickly sprang up in the

church of employing that day for religious assembly and worship. On what day could they so certainly expect to meet the Lord in spirit as on that day which again and again he signaled by his visible appearance to them after his resurrection?

This impression must have been strongly intensified by the miraculous occurrences of Pentecost, if that festival fell, as we think probable, on the first day of the week—a view maintained by the early tradition of the church and by many eminent scholars.\* On that day, which has fitly

\* Some difference of opinion has existed as to the proper computation of the day of Pentecost—some reckoning it from the 15th Nisan, or Passover, and others from the Sabbath of the Passover week. In the latter case, Pentecost would invariably fall on the first day of the week. The former method of computation is, however, to be accepted as the correct one. In that case, the determination of the day on which Pentecost fell in the year of the crucifixion is dependent on the view taken in regard to the day of the crucifixion. This is regarded by many scholars, and those of the very highest authority, as the 14th Nisan. As this was therefore the sixth day of the week, the succeeding first day of the week coincides, according to this view, with the day on which the omer was offered, from which seven weeks were reckoned until Pentecost (Lev. 23:15), which would thus fall on the first day of the week. That the day of offering the omer was the day of Christ's resurrection gains some support from the passage which this fact seems to have suggested, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." 1 Cor. 15:20. If, however, the opposite, but much less strongly supported, view is taken,

been called the birthday of the church, began those spiritual endowments which prove that the ascended Lord is indeed enthroned at the right hand of the Father and from that place of power is conferring gifts on men. The day marked by the resurrection of the Lord and by repeated appearances of the Risen One in bodily form, and also crowned, as we believe, by his spiritual manifestation through the Holy Ghost, needed no other indorsement of its character and required no other warrant for its observance.

Not the seventh day of a rejected, executed, and entombed Jesus, but the first day of a risen, triumphant, and glorified Christ, is henceforth the festal day of joyful praise and thankful worship. Although the disciples had the promise of the Master, "Lo, I am with you always," and although his pledge was to meet at any time and place with the two or three then and there gathered together, it is not surprising that they soon came to specially seek his presence on that day which specially he had distinguished. Such was doubtless the origin of the custom, which already prevailed in apostolic times, of gathering for worship and cel-

placing the crucifixion on the 15th Nisan, the fiftieth succeeding day, or Pentecost, must of course have fallen on a Sabbath. As to the day of the crucifixion, see Meyer on John 18:28, and the learned excursus of Godet, in his "Commentary on John." See also Meyer on Acts 2:1.

celebrating the Lord's Supper together on the first day of the week.

And are we not authorized to conclude that the apostles were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this distinction of this day? We read in the Gospel of John, ch. 16:13-15, the promise of the Lord to his apostles that, after his departure, the Holy Ghost should "guide" them "into all truth," should "glorify" him, "taking of" his things and "showing them" to his disciples. May we not include in the particulars of this truth, and among these things of Christ, an institution of whose existence we can find traces in the apostolic records and writings, which specially glorifies the Lord as the memorial of his resurrection, and to which the same John, by the most obvious and general interpretation of his words, elsewhere gives the name of "*the Lord's day*"? Rev. 1:10.

The infrequent occurrence of any mention of the Lord's day and its observance in the New Testament is fairly parallel with the rare traces of the Sabbath in the historical books of the Old Testament. Perhaps nothing is so unlikely to get into history as a frequently recurring custom such as this. The existence of such customs is quietly assumed by the chronicler, and his references to them will generally be incidental and

undesigned. Indeed, it may safely be asserted that several of the notices of the Sabbath of Israel found in the Old Testament history are due entirely to irregularities in its observance, such as called forth the exhortations and denunciations of the prophets.

The most distinct reference to the Christian use of the first day of the week is that found in Acts 20:7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." There is unquestionably assumed here a practice of coming together for the purpose of "breaking bread." It is uncertain whether this "breaking bread" refers primarily to the Lord's Supper, or to the *agapæ* or love-feasts which were common in the early church; nor does it much matter, for it is most probable that the Lord's Supper was usually celebrated in connection with the love-feast, and in either case the practice of ecclesiastical assemblage is established. There is no hint that the church at Troas was called together by Paul for purposes of instruction, but the language clearly implies that the apostle availed himself of the occasion brought about by the custom of assemblage on the first day of the week to preach to the people. It is worthy of notice that he abode seven days at Troas, and that this first day of the

week was the last day of his stay, as if it had been his design to tarry long enough at Troas to join with the disciples at that place on the day of public fellowship and worship. A similar stay of exactly seven days is noted in the next chapter as occurring at Tyre, possibly with the same intent. Acts 21:4, 5. Here, then, is a plain record of the custom of assemblage on the first day of the week, less than thirty years after the resurrection. The language is just what would be used in such a case, and would not be appropriate to another state of facts.

Another incidental allusion to the religious use of the day—an allusion none the less valuable, because incidental—is the direction of Paul in 1 Cor. 16:1, 2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” Among the religious duties to which the day was consecrated was that of almsgiving. Such was a most appropriate use of the day, and had its precedent in the free-will offerings made on Jewish holy days. That this laying in store did not mean a simple hoarding of gifts by each one in his own house, is emphatically shown by the reason alleged for the injunc-

tion, "that there be no gatherings" (i. e., "collections," the same word used in the first verse) "when I come." The Corinthians were on that day to deposit their alms in a common treasury. If the gifts had had to be collected from house to house, the very object of the apostle's direction would have failed to be secured. We must conclude, then, that these collections were made statedly, at the meetings for public worship which occurred on the first day of the week.

It is, perhaps, not going too far to suggest that the shrewdness of the apostle appears in this plan for systematic benevolence. He well knew that the giving which is connected with religious worship is by the very act of worship stimulated to a larger liberality; therefore to the worship of praise and prayer on the Lord's day was appropriately added the worship by gifts. It is further to be noted that the apostle declares this custom to be already established among the churches of Galatia.

There are not a few passages which can be quoted in proof of the habit of stated assemblage in the apostolic church. A well-known and frequently-cited instance is Heb. 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another." No reproof for neglect would lie against



the persons addressed in this text unless there existed a custom of regular, stated assemblage, involving a well-recognized and clearly-defined duty. While the first day of the week is not mentioned in this place, yet the passage fits in perfectly with what we know of the early uses of that day. To the same effect are the references of Paul in one of his letters to the Corinthians: "When ye come together in the church I hear that there be divisions among you," 1 Cor. 11:18; "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, etc. . . . How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." 1 Cor. 14:23, 26. These quotations establish the fact of stated religious gatherings, and indicate their purpose—instruction, exhortation, and the exercise of spiritual gifts. There is every likelihood that these meetings took place on the day elsewhere indicated as having been employed in that manner, the first day of the week, or the Lord's day.

When it is remembered that the central theme of the apostles' preaching was the resurrection of Christ, that upon that fact they declared that the church must stand or fall; when it is reflected that this greatest of miracles is the beginning and

promise of all redemption and of the new creation, that it is the very pivot on which the world's history turns, the selection of the Lord's day by the apostles as the one festival day of the new society seems so obviously natural, and even necessary, that when we join to these considerations the fact that it was so employed, we can no longer deny to the religious use of Sunday the high sanction of apostolic authority. Preachers of the gospel of the resurrection and founders of the church of the resurrection, they gave a new, sacred character to the day of the resurrection by their own example and by their explicit injunctions.

In the apostolic age the first day of the week had already received the title of "the Lord's day," as appears from the remarkable text in the Apocalypse where John states, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Rev. 1:10. It is impossible to give any suitable meaning to this except as a reference to the first day of the week. That interpretation which paraphrases it "day of the Lord," meaning thereby the judgment-day, is not warranted by the construction or by the context.\* The prominence given to the resurrection in the connection (verses 5 and 18) fully warrants

\* See Cremer's "Biblico-Theological Lexicon," *sub voce* κυριακος. Also "Commentaries" of Düsterdieck, Alford, Lange, etc.

the conclusion—when we remember also the most ancient ecclesiastical use of the phrase—that the day of the weekly celebration of the resurrection was the day in question. The beloved disciple on the lonely island of his exile joins with his distant brethren in Ephesus and the other churches of Asia Minor in their worship of the risen and exalted Saviour. To him thus worshipping again the miracle of Pentecost is repeated, and he is seized and enwrapped with spiritual influences; again the Risen One, who had repeatedly appeared on the first day of the week, manifests himself to his beloved disciple, not in the form that came forth from Joseph's tomb, but in the glorified body of his session at the right hand of the Father. Again is the Christian Sabbath signalized as the day of special spiritual communion with our blessed Lord. It is therefore peculiarly his own—the Lord's day.

As has already been observed, there is no trace of any authorized religious use of the Jewish Sabbath by the Christian church in the whole New Testament. On the contrary, the obligation to keep it is denied, both by precept and practice. But we have also discovered that the first day of the week was kept as a day of religious worship by the apostles and the New Testament church. We are warranted therefore in asserting divine authority

for the institution of the Lord's day; and although it is not called Sabbath for centuries afterwards, for the reason that to call it so would confuse it with the Hebrew institution,\* yet the essential ideas of the Sabbath were embodied in it, and it became truly the Christian Sabbath and the truest Sabbath that the world has yet known. Not by a formal change of day, but by a real succession to the spiritual meaning of the primitive institution, it has superseded every previously designated day of rest, and has become the final earthly form of the abiding Sabbath.

\* The word Sabbath had become in fact and was freely used as a name for the seventh day of the week. This use still survives in the Italian *Sabato*, the Spanish *Sabado*, the French *Samedi*, and the German *Samstag*. Those who base any argument for seventh-day observance on these names should remember that the same languages, excepting German, give to the first day of the week a name derived from the Latin *Dominica*—Lord's day. The first and seventh days of the week are by the southern nations of Europe, among whom the gospel first spread, distinguished from the other days of the week by not bearing heathen names. There has thus been placed in the calendar a distinct monument of the coexistence of both institutions, side by side, in the early Christian ages. The Lord's day has survived the decay of its effete and abolished predecessor. Warning cannot be given too often of the danger of confounding Sabbath as the name of a day of the week and Sabbath as a modern name of an institution older by many centuries than the Hebrew institution which has given it its name.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CHANGE OF DAY.

“The old order changeth, giving place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

TENNYSON.

THE phrase “change of day” is misleading. What really has taken place is more than a mere alteration of the day; it is a newly created form of the institution which has superseded all past forms. The Lord’s day rests on reasons of its own, and has a life of its own, independent of anything that has been bequeathed to it from the Jewish Sabbath; but there have also been incorporated into it the ideas of the abiding Sabbath which it worthily expresses.

Again let it be urged that the Sabbath as an institution and the Sabbath as the name of a day are entirely distinct.\* In the Scriptures the name is applied only to the Sabbath of Israel. It is only by universal modern consent that we use the word “Sabbath” as the name of an institution of rest and worship, ordained at the Creation and

\* See definition of “Sabbath” in Webster’s “Unabridged Dictionary.”

confirmed in every divine dispensation. This fact held firmly in mind will rescue us from the delusions and illusions produced in too many minds by names and words. To clear the mental atmosphere of any mistiness let the case be thus stated:

God at the Creation ordained that a seventh day after six days of work should be hallowed by rest from ordinary toil and by special religious activity; to his chosen people he gave the same ordinance, placing it besides in the moral code transmitted through them to the world, and by them it was observed and called the Sabbath; in the Christian dispensation it was again confirmed and newly established under the name of the Lord's day; in the later days of the Christian church, seeing that but one institution lives under this triple manifestation, we have commonly applied the name most commonly used in the Bible, the name "Sabbath," which specially belongs to the Jewish day, to the whole institution; and this is not inappropriate when we remember that the word "Sabbath" is the one used in the Fourth Commandment, that it means "rest," and that it is the substantive form of the verb employed in Gen. 2 : 2, 3, also Exod. 31 : 17, to describe the divine resting after creation. Keeping this statement in mind, it can be clearly seen that while the obligation of the institution is moral

and abiding, the day chosen, being of the formal element, is only temporary in its character. As a human monument the particular day has value, but it has no bearing on that divine ordinance of rest and worship which comes to us out of eternity and blends again with it at the end of time.

1. *The particular day is no essential part of the institution.*

The moral institution of the Sabbath is based upon the divine rest after creation. This cannot be construed as confined to a literal day of twenty-five hours; for the rest of God is his spiritual activity in providence, and afterwards in redemption, which followed the mere physical task of creation. God is still keeping his Sabbath. Time is an adjustment to our human weakness, a mode of our finite thinking; and while the law of the Sabbath is such that, when manifested, it must make a special portion of time the material of which the Sabbath consists, yet its moral obligation is inherent in its moral meaning, and not in its temporal garb of times and seasons. Yet, without doubt, the spiritual intent of the Sabbath will fail of full realization except all men unite upon one day. This one day we arrive at, not by a study of ancient calendars and chronology, but by a religious *consensus* of the Christian church, which has not been without divine gui-

dance, and which has for the highest and holiest reasons fixed upon the Lord's day as the day which for Christendom embodies within itself the perpetual obligation of the Sabbatic law.

Another difficulty is connected with our purely arbitrary use of the word "day." When does the day commence and end? Shall we define, as in the first chapter of Genesis, that the "evening and morning" make a day, and therefore reckon from sunset to sunset, as did the Puritans? or shall we keep the civil day from midnight to midnight? And by either method of calculation what would become of the Sabbath at the poles, where either from sunset to sunset or from midnight to midnight would give a Sabbath a whole year long? Again, if we travel around the world to the westward, we shall gain a day on the sun. Hence Dr. Wallis,\* of Oxford, recommended seventh-day Sabbatarians to make a voyage around the world, "going out of the Atlantic ocean westward by the straits of Magellan to the East Indies, and then from the east returning by the cape of Good Hope homeward, and let them keep their Saturday-Sabbath all the way. When they come home to England they will find their

\* John Wallis, F. R. S., Savilian professor of Geometry in the University of Oxford, published in 1692 a witty and ingenious "Defence of the Christian Sabbath."



Saturday to fall on our Sunday, and they may thenceforth continue to observe their Saturday-Sabbath on the same day with us." Differences of longitude make it impossible to observe the Sabbath everywhere at the same time. Indeed, there is no end to the complications and petty problems that may be raised when we once begin to exalt the form over the substance. Reason and common sense refuse to be put in bondage to such a thought-form as time. It is a return to the slavery of the letter which Christian freedom cannot tolerate.

But as a concession to that human weakness which still is troubled, after eighteen centuries' drill in spiritual religion, about the particular day of the week to be honored, the question will be fairly met.

*2. There is no possible means of fixing the day of the original Sabbath.*

Who can tell on what day of the week the first man was created? The week is not the aliquot part of any other division of time, either lunar or solar. It does not, therefore, fit itself regularly to any calendar. That it should have been preserved unchanged, while the more regular calendar of months and years has undergone alteration more than once, is not for one moment to be believed. For the sake, however, of any

literalists who still believe that the work of creation began on Sunday eve and ended Friday at sunset, it may be suggested that the seventh day of creation was the first day of man's existence. If he began the calculation of the week from that time, and kept the same Sabbath with his Maker, then the first day of the week, and not the seventh, was the primitive and patriarchal Sabbath. If a crude, bald literalism is to be the rule of interpretation, let us follow it boldly, no matter where it takes us. This suggestion is made, not for any value which it possesses in itself, but as a fair illustration of the difficulties attending any attempt to fix the day.

But next to positive evidence can be given that the primitive Sabbath was not and could not have been directly and regularly transmitted to the time of Moses. The Hebrew monotheistic development begins with Abram of Chaldæa. It cannot well be doubted that he brought from Mesopotamia the division of the week and the tradition of the Sabbath. That our earliest religious traditions come to us through the Assyrian rather than the Egyptian line, is one of the facts most certainly established by modern research and exploration. Now we have recently learned the exact character of the Chaldæan and Assyrian week. Each month contained thirty days, and

was divided into four weeks of seven days each, the last two days being regarded as intercalated. The first day of the week was therefore regularly the first day of the month.\* The fact that two extra days in every month were excluded from the computation of the week and regularly skipped, makes it impossible that, by this system of computation, the exact recurring seventh day from the creation of man could have been handed down to Abram.

There is also a break between Abram and Moses. For several generations Israel was in bondage in Egypt, and, we must infer, without a Sabbath. The Egyptians had not at that time the seven-day week, but observed instead a period of ten days. It is not at all likely that a servile tribe, probably without letters or culture, could have preserved unchanged for over four hundred years a week whose very existence was connected with a day of rest of which they had been deprived. Consequently, in the wilderness, the Sabbath is introduced as something new; and while its law refers back to the beginning, the Mosaic Sabbath is always spoken of as established in memory of the deliverance from

\* Consult the hemerologies published in "Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia," IV. pl. 32 and 33, by Sayce. Also "Records of the Past," VII. 159-168. See F. Le Normant, "Beginnings of History," 248.

Egypt.\* Here again the succession of days was probably lost.

Neither is there any absolute certainty that the Jews at the time of Christ kept the exact day of Mosaic institution. There is even a possibility that the Babylonian captivity effaced temporarily the institution. When again reinstated by Nehemiah, it cannot certainly be affirmed to have fallen on the same day. A doubt, not wholly captious, arises when we consider the confusion which contact with the irregular Babylonian week may have occasioned. These facts are quite sufficient to dispose of any pretence of observing the original day of the Sabbath.

\* It can be shown with some certainty that the Sabbath instituted by Moses was entirely a new institution to Israel. Careful examination of the sixteenth chapter of Exodus which relates its establishment will show that, apparently, exactly a week previous to the day marked by the absence of manna Israel pitched tent in the wilderness of Sin. That day could not, therefore, have been a Sabbath at that time. Yet it seems probable that some day had been celebrated by them before, for it is not likely that God would leave his people in their wanderings for an entire month without days of rest, especially when it is remembered that one purpose of the escape from Egypt was to gain the opportunity of worship. But if the day exactly a week before the first Israelitish Sabbath was a common work-day, it follows that the institution of the Sabbath by Moses may have involved an actual change of day. This argument is at least sufficiently fair against the literalists who insist that the Saturday-Sabbath is the precise day on which the Creator rested.

3. *There are presumptions in favor of a change.*

There are good reasons for expecting a change with the establishment of the Christian church. Besides the inward meaning of spiritual release from secular toil, the day of rest and worship always has possessed under every divine economy a monumental significance. In the patriarchal age, the creation of the world and of man was the great event to be commemorated; in Israel, the deliverance from Egypt; and in the Christian dispensation, the perfected redemption through the resurrection of our Lord. The last, indeed, is a new creation, which bears in it the promise of "a new heaven and a new earth;" it is a deliverance from a bondage more bitter than that of Egypt. By just so much as the spiritual creation is more noble than that of the material universe, and by so much as the moral and eternal redemption of the race excels in glory the national redemption of Israel, is the Lord's day more worthy of perpetuity, and more divinely honored, than any form which the Sabbath had previously taken.

Let the following considerations be noticed. Such was the strong prejudice of the first Christians in favor of Jewish observances that the change could not have taken place without divine authority. The apostles had received full

power from the Saviour to legislate for his church, presumably on this as on all questions, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and we cannot doubt that they exercised their right. What then did they do? They either recognized the claim of the Sabbath as unchanged, or abolished it altogether, or transferred its obligation to the Lord's day. But while the apostles, convened at the council in Jerusalem to decide which among the practices distinguishing a Jew from a heathen were necessary to be observed by Gentile Christians, omitted observance of the Sabbath from their commands (Acts 15:1-29); and while the apostle Paul explicitly set aside the Jewish Sabbath; yet in affirming (as did Jesus also) the continued obligation of the Decalogue, the apostles confirmed the abiding Sabbath. The conclusion is irresistible that they established the Lord's day as the rightful inheritor of the Sabbatic idea, and that to it they transferred the Sabbath obligation of the moral law.

Again, in the prophecy of Isaiah (chs. 56 and 58), the continued existence of the Sabbatic institution in the dispensation marked by the revelation of God's salvation in Christ and by the spread of the knowledge and acceptance of the true God in the Gentile world, *i. e.*, under Christianity, seems to be foretold. Unless the Lord's

day be truly the Sabbath of the Lord, this prophecy has so far failed of any worthy fulfilment.

There is great force in the universal adoption of the Lord's day as Sabbath, as will be more fully shown in the following chapters. It is inconceivable that divine authority can now be attached to a day which the church of God has not observed for eighteen centuries; and it is equally impossible to think that the Lord's day is without this authority. It is easy to undervalue this argument from consent, but such long-continued and universal consent cannot be explained except on the supposition of some sufficient authority beneath it. The absence of any controversy on this question of day in the early church is by itself almost absolutely conclusive as to the divine superintendence in that historic process by which the Christian Lord's day took in time the place, name, and authority of the Jewish Sabbath, and became the abiding Sabbath, the true inheritor of all the Sabbath meanings of all the ages. The Lord's day, as the day of the Redeemer's resurrection, and therefore the representative of the real coming completion of God's counsel of creation, is the only true type of the Sabbath of eternity, which has hovered over our sin-cursed planet through all its history, but will on the final day of resurrection come down

to bless the redeemed earth with its unending gladness. Only on the Lord's day can the Sabbath be kept in all its meaning. If worship and rest were all of the Sabbatic idea, they could indeed be observed on other days; but the abiding Sabbath has deeper thoughts. These the Lord's day alone expresses.



## CHAPTER V.

## HISTORY OF THE LORD'S DAY IN THE ANTE-NICENE PERIOD.

“To abstain from secular toil and do no mundane task; to be free to attend to spiritual works; to assemble at the church and give ear to the Scriptures and the instructions; to think concerning heavenly things; to have solicitude about your future hope; to keep the coming judgment before your eyes; to regard not present and seen, but unseen and future things—this it is to observe the Christian Sabbath.”

ORIGEN.

FOR the perfect establishment of the Christian Sabbath, as has already been observed, there was needed a social revolution in the Roman Empire. The infant church, in its struggles through persecution and martyrdom, had not the power even to keep the Lord's day perfectly itself, much less could the sanctity of the day be guarded from desecration by unbelievers. We should expect therefore to find the institution making a deepening groove on society and in history, and becoming a well-defined ordinance the very moment that Christianity became a dominant power. That such was the case the facts fully confirm. From the records of the early church and the works of the Christian Fathers we can clearly see

the growth of the institution culminating in the famous edict of Constantine, when Christianity became the established religion of the empire.

The references to the Lord's day in the writings of the first century are confessedly scanty; yet this is not surprising when we remember that only half the century really belongs to the history of the church, and how few authentic writings are in existence which can be ascribed to that period. But when we add the New Testament references which properly belong here to the rest, the testimonies of the latter half of the first century become very respectable both in numbers and weight.

The earliest writer who can be cited is Clement of Rome, who died about A. D. 100. His Epistle to the Corinthians is of all the ecclesiastical writings of the primitive church the most devout and apostolic in spirit. He says, "We ought to do in order all things which the Master hath commanded us to perform at fixed times. He hath commanded the due observance of offerings and rites, to take place neither irregularly nor negligently, but at appointed times and hours."\* This passage does not indeed refer by name to the Lord's day, but it proves most conclusively the

\* Clement of Rome, "First Epistle to the Corinthians,"  
‡ 40.

existence at that time of prescribed seasons of worship, and asserts their appointment by the Saviour himself. Here is a witness to this important link in the argument who was contemporaneous with the apostle John. In the reference to "offerings" we recall the direction of Paul to make benevolent collections on the first day of the week. The passage is a testimony to well-known existing institutions, fully in harmony with all we have discovered of the uses of that day.

Ignatius, a disciple of John, who wrote about A. D. 100, is the next author to be quoted. In a contrast between Judaism and Christianity, after making the claim that the holy prophets were Christian in spirit, he goes on to say: "If those who were concerned with old things have come to newness of hope, no longer keeping Sabbaths, but living according to the Lord's day, on which our life has risen again through him and his death, . . . how can we live without him whom the prophets waited for as their Teacher, being in spirit his disciples? And therefore did he, when he came whom they justly waited for, raise them from the dead."\* There may be here a suggestion

\* "Ignatius, "Ad Magnesios," § 9. The reading of the edition of Cotelerius is followed in the above translation. See also the notes in Jacobson's edition. The passage is obscure and the text doubtless corrupt, but the trend of meaning is not indistinct. The argument can do without it, if necessary.

that among the dead who arose at the crucifixion of Jesus were the holy prophets, and that, having thus risen again, they kept Lord's day with him, and that consequently even the Old Testament saints are "no longer keeping Sabbaths." But we have nothing to do with the Scripture interpretations of our author. It is sufficient to note that he refers to the Jewish Sabbath as something annulled and abolished, that he indicates the first day of the week as its successor, and follows the example of his teacher, John, in calling it the "Lord's day." It is a striking fact that in the forgery known to scholars as the "larger epistle" of Ignatius, which is simply an expansion of this genuine writing, this passage is understood as referring to the Lord's day, but it is so modified as to enjoin continued observance also of the Jewish Sabbath; a witness to the fact that will hereafter be referred to, that a later period of the primitive church disclosed a tendency to react towards Judaism, and that old documents were falsified and others forged to fortify the growing ritualistic movement.

Here may be introduced a quotation from the so-called Epistle of Barnabas, which must be dated in the beginning of the second century at least, if indeed it be not a genuine writing of the companion of Paul. It is as follows: "Lastly, He says

to them, Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot bear with. Consider what He says: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me; but those which I have made when, resting from all things, I shall make the eighth day a beginning, which is the beginning of another world. Therefore we keep the eighth day with joy, on which Jesus also arose from the dead, and having appeared, he ascended into heaven."\* The cessation of the Jewish Sabbath, the substitution of the Lord's day, and the reason of the change, are all confirmed by this passage.

A further testimony, this time from a pagan source, is found in the well-known letter of Pliny to Trajan, A. D. 100, in which he is representing the case of the new "superstition," as he calls Christianity, to the emperor. He says: "They (the Christians) constantly declare the whole of their crime or error to be this, that they are accustomed to meet together on a stated day before it is light and sing a hymn to Christ as God."†

\* "Epistle of Barnabas," § 15. The external evidence of the authorship of this writing would be convincing but for the discredit which its internal character casts upon it, its seeming ignorance of some facts in Jewish life and history making it doubtful if it be the writing of a Hebrew by birth. There is a very close relationship between this writing and the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." No critical basis has yet been laid on which the priority of either can be established.

† Pliny, "Epistles," X. 97.

As we enter the second century there is no lack of proofs of the existence of the Lord's day as an established institution, as well as of the disuse into which the Jewish Sabbath had fallen.

Justin Martyr, the great apologist of the primitive church, A. D. 138, makes abundant references to the custom. He writes thus: "On the day called Sunday there is a gathering in one place of all who reside either in the cities or in country-places, and the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read."\* He goes on to give a detailed account of the services of the day. A discourse was delivered based on the passages of Scripture read, prayers were offered, the Lord's Supper was administered, and a collection was taken up. The likeness of this account to the New Testament suggestions of the uses of the "first day of the week" is unmistakable. The "breaking of bread" and the "laying by in store" of the "collections for the saints" are clearly confirmed. He goes on to state the reason for observing this day: "On Sunday we all assemble in common because it is the 'first day,' on which God, having dispelled darkness and disorder, made the world, and because on the same day Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead."† In another place he uses circumcision

\* Justin Martyr, "Apology," I. 67.

† Ibid.

as a type of the Lord's day: "The command to circumcise children on the eighth day was a type of the real circumcision by which we are circumcised from error and sin through our Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead on the first day of the week; therefore it remains the chief and first of all the days."\* It should be remarked that Justin is writing for the conviction of heathen, and therefore does not speak of the "Lord's day," but calls it by its heathen name "Sunday." His evidence is conclusive as to the distinction given to the first day of the week and to its universal pious observance by the Christians of his time.

About A. D. 170, Melito, bishop of Sardis, wrote a work on the "Lord's Day;"† and about the same date Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in a letter written to the church at Rome and addressed to Soter, its bishop, uses this language: "To-day we have spent the Lord's holy day, and in it we have read your epistle."‡

The recently discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," if genuine, as is maintained by many eminent and careful scholars, must be given a place early in this century. This church hand-book enjoins: "And on the Lord's day being

\* "Dialogue with Trypho," § 41.

† Eusebius, "Ecclesiastical History," IV. 26.

‡ Ibid., IV. 23.

gathered together, break bread and give thanks, having also confessed your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure.”\* The peculiarly intensive phrase rendered “Lord’s day” here is, literally, “The Lord’s day of the Lord,” as if to emphasize its sacredness and obligation. There is not in the whole document any reference whatever to the seventh-day Sabbath, and when it is remembered that this is a manual of directions as to religious observance, the omission is significant.† The Jewish Sabbath is not even mentioned as a fast, though it was certainly observed as such at a later time. The direction with regard to fasting is: “And let not your fasting be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second of the week and the fifth; but do ye fast on the fourth and on the Preparation.”‡ The Preparation day referred to is the sixth of the week, Friday. Now that the fast days were each set forward in the week from the days customarily observed by the Jews is certainly suggestive—when taken in connection with the injunction respecting the Lord’s day and the

\* “Teaching,” c. 14.

† The silence of the “Teaching” on the seventh-day Sabbath is in marked contrast with the forged “Apostolical Constitutions,” which bear traces of having been built up by a later ritualistic age partly on the basis of this apparently much more ancient document.

‡ “Teaching,” c. 18.



silence on the subject of the Jewish Sabbath—of the fact that the former was already regarded as superseding the latter, and that the change in fast days followed in consequence.\*

Irenæus, the famous bishop of Lyons, A. D. 178, is another witness. For a full understanding of one fragment preserved of this Father, it must be stated that the Lord's day was so fully regarded as a day of joy by the first Christians that many of them went to the extent of asserting that prayer on that day should always be offered in a standing position, as kneeling was the posture of humiliation. In the fragment referred to, he says concerning Pentecost that "on it we do not bend the knees, since it is equal in authority with the Lord's day, according to the word spoken as to its reason."† Observe that the strongest thing he can say for Pentecost is to claim for it equal authority with the Lord's day, which

\* This view of the case is confirmed by the further fact that when Saturday came a little later to be observed as a fast it was regarded simply as a continuation of the Friday fast in preparation for the Lord's day, "in order," says Victorinus, "that we may come to our food on the Lord's day with giving of thanks." And he continues, "Let the preparation be superimposed (upon the seventh day), that we may not seem to observe the Sabbath with the Jews." Routh, "Rel. Sac.," III. 457. As to this superposition, so also the Council of Eliberis, "Canon XXVI."

† "Fragm. lib. de Pascha," etc.

seems, therefore, to be unquestioned. Also, in the famous Easter controversy which disturbed the church during this century, the Gallic churches, under the leadership of Irenæus, sent a memorial to Victor, bishop of Rome, in which it is remarked that "on the Lord's day only should the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord be observed."\* The point in question was this: Shall Easter be celebrated at the time of the Jewish Passover, on whatever day of the week that may fall, or on the Christian Lord's day? Let it be noticed that although there was much dispute as to the proper time of annual celebration of the resurrection, there was never any difference of opinion as to the proper weekly observance. Irenæus, in another place, argues that the Decalogue is still binding upon all men, for the reason that God spoke its commandments by his own voice; while the other ordinances of the law are not thus obligatory, because they were given separately by the mouth of Moses; the latter, he declares, are "cancelled by the new covenant of liberty."† It may be remarked here, once for all, that nothing in the whole range of early Christian testimony can be found to sustain the opinion that the Fathers thought themselves free from the obliga-

\* Eusebius, "Ecclesiastical History," V. 24.

† Irenæus, "Adv. Hæreses, IV. 31.

tions of the Decalogue, any more than from the moral spirit of the Old Testament generally. The whole weight of their authority is exactly the other way. Every one of the Ten Commandments was held as morally obligatory by the primitive Christian church.

Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194, in a mystical exposition of the Fourth Commandment, in the midst of fanciful speculations on the religious signification of numbers, comes down long enough from the loftier flights of his spiritual arithmetic to tell us that the seventh day of the law has given place to the eighth day of the gospel, which has thus become a true seventh, or Sabbath. The old seventh has become nothing more than a common working day.\* Nobody, of course, can tell what far-fetched and unheard-of meanings may lie underneath the words of the good semi-Gnostic Father; but as far as his testimony goes, it helps to establish the fact that the first day of the week filled the same place in the minds of the church of that time that the seventh day had occupied in the Jewish system. Clement also gives directions for the observance of the Lord's day, which he mentions by name.†

This century will be concluded with the mention of that most brilliant and erratic of all

\* Clemens Alex., "Stromata," VI. 16. † Ibid., VII. 12.

the ante-Nicene Christian writers, Tertullian of Carthage. Here are some extracts from his writings: "Sundays we give to joy." "We think it wrong to fast, or pray kneeling, on the Lord's day."\* Speaking of this custom of standing in prayer on Sunday, he remarks: "We, as we have received it, ought not so much by this custom alone to observe the day of the Lord's resurrection, but ought also to be free from every hindrance of anxiety and duty, laying aside our worldly business, lest we give place to the devil."† So prominent a feature of the Christianity of that age was Sunday observance that Tertullian thought it necessary to defend the Christians from the charge of sun-worship: "Likewise, if we spend Sunday in rejoicing, it is from a different reason than sun-worship; we are also distinct from those who spend Saturday in idleness and feasting, leaving the ancient Jewish custom of which they are ignorant."‡

This vehement writer fitly closes this list of evidences of the honored place filled by the Lord's day in the first two centuries of the Christian church. Let us review the testimony thus far given. In order to appreciate its proper value, it should be observed that the post-apos-

\* Tertullian, "De Cor. Mil.," c. 3. † "De Orat.," c. 23.

‡ "Apologia," c. 16.

tolic writers give no hint of the origin of the Lord's day in their times, but speak of it as something already in existence, indeed as an apostolic institution. To them it came with all the sanction of primitive Christian usage, with the full consecration of the Master himself. Although, for reasons given already, they nowhere call it a Sabbath, yet they speak of it in such connections with the Jewish Sabbath and with the Fourth Commandment as to fully invest it with Sabbatic obligation. They give also such an account of its reasons and its uses as to set it upon the foundations of the ancient Sabbatic institution. With many of their opinions we, in this age, are forced to disagree; some of their doctrines must be looked upon, in our present light, as in the highest degree fanciful and absurd; but as witnesses to *facts*, their credibility is unshaken and their authority is sufficient. The undivided support of that authority is on the side of the Lord's day.

Origen, the great Alexandrian theologian and commentator, who lived in the beginning of the third century, writes that the Lord's day is placed above the Jewish Sabbath.\* "To keep the Lord's day" is, in his opinion, "one of the marks of the perfect Christian."† He is the first

\* Origen, "Commentary on Exodus."

† "Against Celsus," VIII. 22.

to apply the term "Jewish Sabbath" to the seventh day. He also speaks of the "Christian Sabbath," although it cannot be positively ascertained from the connection whether he refers to the Lord's day, or only to the gospel dispensation generally. He states in the most absolute manner, in this connection, that the obligation of the Judaic institution had totally passed away.\*

In the year 254, sixty-six bishops, composing the Third Council of Carthage issued a synodical letter, in which, after the manner of their time, they spiritualize the rite of circumcision and make it a type of the Lord's day. "For because the eighth day was celebrated by Jewish carnal circumcision, it is a pledge given beforehand in shadow and figure, but which, Christ having come, is fulfilled in reality. For because the eighth day, that is the first after the Sabbath, was to be the day on which the Lord would rise, this eighth day, being the first after the Sabbath, and the Lord's day, was foreshadowed by the figure, which figure has ceased since the reality has appeared and the spiritual circumcision has been given us."†

Next may be cited Commodian, A. D. 270, who speaks of the Lord's day. Victorinus, the

\* "Homily" 23, on Numbers.

† Cyprian, "Epist." LIX.

martyr, A. D. 290, whom we have already quoted (p. 221, note), sees a reference to the Lord's day in the heading of the sixth and twelfth Psalms.\* To the same time belongs Peter, bishop of Alexandria, who writes: "We cannot be charged with neglecting the fourth day and the Preparation, which have been fitly appointed for us as fasts by tradition: the fourth, because of the plot formed by the Jews for the betrayal of the Lord, and the Preparation, on account of his suffering for us. But we keep with joy the Lord's day, because of him who rose thereon, and on it we ought not to bend the knee."† If the seventh day had been at all observed at this time, it would certainly have received some mention in such a catalogue of sacred seasons as the above. But the fact that the fourth and sixth days, in commemoration of events in gospel history, were substituted as fasts for the second and fifth of Judaism, which were supposed to commemorate Moses' ascent and descent of the mount, seems to be placed in direct relation to the greater fact, and to follow from it, that a like change had already come to the Sabbatic institution.

This brings us to the end of the third century. Our witnesses form an unbroken chain of support

\* Routh, "Rel. Sac.," III. 457.

† "Bibl. Patr." (Galland), IV. 107.

to the practice of Lord's-day observance. With the beginning of the next century a great revolution took place, which marks a new era in the life of this institution. The Emperor Constantine was converted, and Christianity became, practically, the religion of the empire. It was now possible to enforce the Christian Sabbath and make its observance universal. In the year 321, consequently, was issued the famous edict of Constantine commanding abstinence from servile labor on Sunday. The following is the full text:

#### THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE TO HELPIDIUS.

On the venerable day of the sun, let the magistrates and people living in towns rest, and let all workshops be closed. Nevertheless, in the country, those engaged in the cultivation of land may freely and lawfully work, because it often happens that another day is not so well fitted for sowing grain and planting vines; lest by neglect of the best time, the bounty provided by heaven should be lost. Given the seventh day of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls, both for the second time.\*

To fully understand the provisions of this legislation, the peculiar position of Constantine must be taken into consideration. He was not

\* "Cod. Justin.," III. 12, 3.



himself free from all remains of heathen superstition.\* It seems certain that before his conversion he had been particularly devoted to the worship of Apollo, the sun-god.† He ruled over an empire composed of Christians and pagans‡ in perhaps nearly equal numbers, the former dwelling in the cities, and the latter occupying the rural districts. The problem before him was to legislate for the new faith in such a manner as not to seem entirely inconsistent with his old practices, and not to come in conflict with the prejudices of his pagan subjects. These facts serve to explain the peculiarities of this decree. He names the holy day not the Lord's day, but the "day of the sun," the heathen designation, and thus at once seems to identify it with his former Apollo-worship; he excepts the country from the operation of the law, and thus avoids collision with his heathen subjects. The emperor may have supposed that he was furnishing an easy transition from heathenism to Christianity, especially to the Platonists of his time, by substituting Christ for Apollo, the revealer, under their system, of the supreme God. The identity

\* Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," chap. 20.

† See Gieseler's "Ecclesiastical History." Upon his coins Constantine had impressed both the figure of Apollo and the name of Christ!

‡ The word pagan means "rural."

of the day of the sun and the Lord's day favored such a plan.\* It would be easy to criticise the motives of Constantine, but before too severe judgment is pronounced upon him, he deserves that a fair representation should be made both of his own prepossessions and of the special difficulties he had to encounter. That this edict shows the traces of a temporizing policy does not diminish its value as a proof of the position occupied by the Lord's day at the close of this period, and its practical succession to the venerable character of the Sabbath of the law.

In this period flourished Eusebius, the bishop of Cæsarea, well known as the first historian of the church. He states that Constantine appointed for prayer "the first and chief of days, which is truly the Lord's day and the day of salvation."† This sheds light on the way in which Christians regarded the decree of the emperor. In an elaborate eulogy of Constantine, he praises

\* The attempt of some advocates of the Saturday-Sabbath to derive the sacred use of Sunday from a weekly heathen festival in honor of the sun is utterly unfair, for the very sufficient reason that no such weekly festivals were ever in existence. It would be quite as fair to connect the Jewish Sabbath with Apollo for the reason that the number "seven" was sacred to that deity, his feasts coming on the seventh of each month; or to identify the observance of Saturday with the Roman Saturnalia.

† Eusebius, "Life of Constantine," IV. 18.

him for commanding that all dwellers, whether on land or sea, should meet every week and keep the Lord's day as a festival, for the rest of the body and the nurture of the soul."\* Eusebius was also a strong defender of the Lord's day as against the claims of the Jewish Sabbath, which about this time were urged by the Ebionites. He thus writes: "By the new covenant, the word carried forward and transferred the festival of the Sabbath to the morning light, and gave, as a symbol of true rest, the Saviour and Lord's day and first day of light on which the Saviour of the world, after all his deeds among men, obtained victory over death."† After much of the same sort, he goes on to remark, with regard to the old Sabbath worship, that "these things we have transferred to the Lord's day, as being more lordly and chief in itself, and first, and worthier than the Jewish Sabbath: for on this day at the creation God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light; and on this day on our souls the Sun of Righteousness has arisen." He also says that in keeping the Lord's day holy, "we keep the festival of the Sabbath holily and spiritually."‡ He accords with the general view of the early church that the Lord's day has superseded the Jewish Sab-

\* "Eulogy of Constantine," c. 17.

† "Comment on Psalm 91."

‡ Ibid.

- bath, but that it must not be confounded with that institution, being in every way a higher and nobler Sabbath. When we remember that Eusebius was doubtless the most faithful student in his time of the Christian ages before him, his testimony becomes of the highest value in settling the position of the Lord's day among primitive Christians.

To this time belongs the great theologian and defender of orthodoxy, Athanasius, the eloquent bishop of Alexandria, the splendor of whose genius has compelled the admiration alike of friend and foe. To him is usually ascribed a writing entitled "Concerning Sabbath and Circumcision." In this work he supports the doctrine that the primal Sabbath, the end of the creation of the world, has passed away, and the Lord's day, which begins a new spiritual creation, has taken its place. He brings out also the spiritual meaning of the first Sabbath. Quoting John 5:17, "My Father worketh hitherto," he argues that the divine rest is not mere passive repose, for "God is continually carrying on the work of renewal." "The Sabbath," he says, "was made to give knowledge of the Creator."\* He thus interprets Psa. 118:24: "'This is the day which the Lord hath made.' And what can this day be but that of the Lord's resurrection? What can it be but the day of

\* Athanasius, "De Sabbatis," *passim*.

salvation to all nations, on which the stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner? The text signifies the resurrection day of our Saviour, which from him has been named the Lord's day."\* In another writing he bitterly denounces his Arian opponents for their violation of the Lord's day, and the cruelties they practised thereon.† A still more remarkable expression is found in a work‡ very doubtfully ascribed to Athanasius, but which probably dates from this period: "The Lord has transferred the day of the Sabbath to the Lord's day."

In no better way can the testimonies of this primitive period of the Christian church be closed than by reference to the great Council of Nicæa, A. D. 325, which gave the final expression to the early Catholic faith in that wonderful creed which, the last spoken confession of the universal church before her unhappy sectarian divisions, is still our sublimest theological symbol of faith. This council does not enact the Lord's day; for that there was no necessity, as it already existed. Neither did the council command its observance, for the good reason that all Christians were agreed on that point, and the decree of the emperor was sufficient for all legal purposes. What the coun-

\* "Comment on Psalm 118."

† "Encyclical Letter."

‡ "De Semente."

cil did do was to secure uniformity of worship on the Lord's day. The following canon was enacted: "Since some are in the habit of kneeling on the Lord's day and Pentecost, in order to better observance of all things in every community, it is fitting that, standing in the sacred assembly, thanks be given to God."\* That the sole mention of the Lord's day by this council is a simple matter of detail such as this, furnishes the most powerful proof of the universality of Lord's-day observance in the church of that period. The argument from silence is in this case conclusive.

Nor does this consideration exhaust the force of the argument from silence. The striking fact that no enactment of the Lord's day can be found among the decrees of any council of the church, œcumenical or provincial, forces us to look to a higher source for its authority. We must assign it to the apostolic age and invest it with apostolic authority. If such is its origin, the state of facts disclosed by the history can easily be comprehended; in any other case the absence of authorization by ecclesiastical legislation is inexplicable. This argument may be thus stated: the Lord's day was established either by apostolic, or by ecclesiastical authority. For the former supposition, we

\* Nicene Council, "Canon XX."

have the statements in the epistles abrogating the Jewish Sabbath, yet affirming the Decalogue, the use made of the first day of the week, and patristic testimony referring the custom back to apostolic times. For the latter supposition there is not a shred of evidence, but deep, unbroken silence. The weight of this dilemma is crushing against both the anti-Sabbatarians and the advocates of the seventh-day Sabbath. If they deny the apostolic authority of the Lord's-day Sabbath, let them account for its origin. Until they can do this, they must be denied a hearing in the tribunal of church history. By the absence of any hint of its later institution by ecclesiastical decree, the Lord's day is shown to be of equal antiquity with the church itself.

To the candid mind, the above citations of authority can lead to no other conclusion than that the Lord's day was religiously observed by the church of the first three centuries, that it was held by them to be of divine authority, and that it had fully superseded the Jewish Sabbath. Those ages of apostolic purity of doctrine and practice have given no uncertain sound in defence of the abiding Sabbath which is embodied in the Lord's day.

## CHAPTER VI.

HISTORY OF THE LORD'S DAY IN THE FOURTH  
AND FIFTH CENTURIES.

“The Lord's day is the figure of the day never to be finished, which has no evening and no to-morrow, the life which shall never cease and never grow old.” BASIL THE GREAT.

THE centuries following the Nicene Council by no means preserved the purity of doctrine and practice of the infant church. Christianity becoming a State religion, the contact with worldly power corrupted the spiritual fountains of the religious consciousness and life. The polity which made the church an arm of the temporal power was not truly Christian, but Jewish. It was an attempt to realize the false Messianic dream of Israel in an external dominion. The corruptions which crept into the church, culminating in the spiritual empire of the Papacy, which is at once the most remarkable fact and the deepest shadow of the world's history, all took the shape of a rank growth of legalism and ritualism in luxuriant variety of forms. The multiplication of fasts and festivals was among the very first results of the new polity. To justify these new holidays, Scripture must be resorted to for arguments, and



the Jewish feast-days furnished a ready store of precedents. It is not surprising that the Sabbath of the law, in some quarters, came in for a share of reverence, and we can note, in some places, a transient revival of its observance in the fourth and fifth centuries.\*

Notwithstanding this, the sum of testimonies of the great writers of this period is for the sanctity of the Lord's day, to which they ascribe the moral authority of the legal Sabbath, which they declare annulled. To give all references to the Sabbath and Lord's day which these years afford would consume too much space. Only the most

\* The attempt is sometimes made to state the case precisely opposite, claiming that disregard of the seventh day grew up in the fourth century. This complete perversion of the fact is accomplished by placing the forged so-called "Apostolical Constitutions" about two hundred years earlier than they were written. Indeed, it is a fair rule of criticism to place any Christian writing which recognizes any obligation to observe the Saturday-Sabbath at least as late as the third century for that very reason. Thus the "Apostolical Constitutions" appear to be a later expansion of germs found in the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" and elsewhere. And the larger Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians is in like manner an enlargement, by some Oriental ritualist, of the genuine document. Reference is here made to these facts and principles for the reason that lately there has been considerable literary activity among the advocates of the Saturday-Sabbath on this very point. The attempt to model American Christianity after the pattern of the Abyssinian Church will hardly be successful.

important, therefore, will be cited. The evidence of this period consists of three kinds: imperial edicts, the decrees of provincial councils, and passages from ecclesiastical writers.

The Emperor Constantine enacted additional laws for Sunday observance, prohibiting military exercises and all judicial proceedings, excepting the manumission of slaves.\*

Theodosius the Great, A. D. 386, extended the prohibitions of labor to the rural districts, forbidding all transaction of business and public amusements.†

Leo, A. D. 469, added a decree, which commanded with great detail:

“The Lord’s day we decree to be always honored and revered. On it let there be exemption from executions; no summons shall be served on any one; let no exaction of security for debts be required; let court attendants be silent; let the advocate rest from his pleadings; let that day be a stranger to lawsuits; let the court-criers’ voices be stilled; let litigants have repose from controversy and time of truce; let adversaries have a chance to meet each other without fear. Nor, in any way, on this religious day can we relax the law of rest, or permit any one to engage in

\* Eusebius, “De Vita Constantini,” IV. 18, 20.

† Coda Theodos., XI. 7, 13; XV. 5, 2.

indecent pleasures. Nothing can excuse on the same day theatrical representations, the circus, or the pitiful spectacle of wild beasts; and the celebration of our birthday, if it should happen to fall on that day, must be deferred. If any one shall be present at any such spectacle on this feast-day, or dares to despise the requirements of this law, on pretence of public or private business, his patrimony shall be confiscated.”\*

Besides these, the Theodosian and Justinian Codes abound in enactments regulating the observance of the Lord’s day and other holidays.† This testimony of public records is the highest type of evidence.

Several provincial councils of the church during this period mention the Lord’s day. That of Sardica, A. D. 350, enforces the duty of worship on the Lord’s day, and threatens excommunication to any resident of a town who shall be absent for three Lord’s days together from the church.‡ The Council of Gangra, A. D. 365, says, “If any one fast on the Lord’s day, let him be anathema.”§ At Laodicæa, A. D. 363, it was decreed: “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on the

\* “Cod. Justin.,” III. 12, 11.

† “Cod. Theodos.,” II. 8, 1; VIII. 8, 1; XV. 5, 5.

‡ Conc. Sardica, “Canon XI.”

§ Conc. Gangra, “Canon XVIII.”

Sabbath, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and shall, as being Christians, so far as may be, do no work on that day. If they be found Judaizing, let them be anathema from Christ."\* Here is a distinct condemnation of the Judaizing tendencies which were growing up at this time, largely manifested in giving an honor to the seventh day which it surely had not received in the earlier years of the church. The Council of Antioch, A. D. 340, the First Council of Toledo, and the Fourth Council of Carthage, all passed canons bearing on the religious observance of the day.

To this period probably belongs the remarkable forgery which assumes the name of "Apostolical Constitutions." Although falsely attributed to Clement of Rome, and pretending to derive its rules from the mouth of the holy apostles themselves, no trace of its existence can be found earlier than the latter part of the fourth century, when Epiphanius refers to a work by that title which he acknowledges is held by many to be of doubtful authority. It is even uncertain whether he is referring to this writing at all. Such is the scanty authority of this much-quoted composition,

\* Conc. Laodic., "Canon XXIX." In this Canon the phrase, "so far as possible," is probably to be explained by the fact that many Christians were not masters of their own time. It is, besides, a permission of "works of necessity."

the citadel of those who to-day advocate the Saturday-Sabbath. (For further discussion of its authenticity, see Appendix C.)

Yet this work testifies to the growing reverence for the Lord's day, everywhere joining it with the Jewish Sabbath as obligatory on Christians. Here are some of the regulations which it prescribes for the church: "He is guilty of sin who fasts on the Lord's day or Pentecost."\* "Keep as festivals the Sabbath and the Lord's day."† "Every Sabbath, except the first, and every Lord's day, gather in your assemblies and rejoice."‡ The first Sabbath excepted by this rule was the Saturday following Good Friday in Passion week. "I Peter and I Paul give command: Let your servants work five days, but on Sabbath and Lord's day let them be at rest and at church for instruction in religion."§ "Especially on the day of the Sabbath and on the Lord's day, on which the Lord arose, most zealously assemble."||

These passages indicate both the respect given to the first day and the extent to which the seventh day, observed in the Western church as a fast of preparation for the Lord's day, had gradually,

\* "Apostolical Constitutions," V. 20.

† Ibid., VII. 23.      ‡ Ibid., V. 20.      § Ibid., VIII. 33.

|| Ibid., II. 59.

under the growing ritualistic feeling in the Eastern church, where Jews abounded, begun to assume its old position. The observance of both days thus imposed on some of the Eastern churches has survived to this time in various localities, especially in the Ethiopian church. This modern seventh-day church is a witness to the essentially Judaic character of this fifth century movement. Circumcision and other Jewish rites are still observed among nominal Christians in the highlands of Ethiopia.\* There are traces of the same tendency among the Nestorians of Asia Minor. Yet these churches are sometimes quoted as having longest preserved the pure apostolic tradition with regard to the Sabbath. From such purity of doctrine and practice may the church be graciously preserved! It should be remarked that the essentially unapostolic character of the "Apostolical Constitutions" is fully established by the fact that they fill well nigh half the year with feast days. The evidence shows that the one Christian festival was gradually being obscured by multiplied holidays. That these "Constitutions" had most influence in the East, and were never received by the Western church, was not because of any lack of ritualistic tendency in the

\* Harris' "Highlands of Ethiopia," Vol. III. pp. 150, 151. See also Dr. A. Grant's "Nestorians."

latter. It seems very possible that *two* rest-days in a week, so grateful to the Oriental character, could not be imposed on the more energetic nations of the West.

While we see some traces of a Judaic revival at this time, yet the general weight of the ecclesiastical writers of this period is on the side of the superior claims of the Lord's day and its supersession to the Sabbath of the law.

Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, who lived about A. D. 350, says in an exposition of the ninety-second Psalm: "While the name and observance of the Sabbath may have been placed on the seventh day, nevertheless we on the eighth day, which is indeed the first, enjoy the blessedness of a perfect Sabbath."\* The truly Sabbatic character of the Lord's day could hardly be more strongly expressed.

Ambrose of Milan, A. D. 370, testifies: "For as soon as the Lord's day began to excel, the Sabbath, which had been first, began to be considered second from the first, for the first rest failed, but the second succeeded."† He also says, "On the seventh day we go to the sepulchre, which is a symbol of the rest on the coming day."‡ In the

\* Hilary, "On Psalm 92."

† Ambrose of Milan, "On Psalm 47."

‡ "De Fid. Res.," II. 2.

latter passage there is probable reference to the not uncommon Saturday fast in preparation for Sunday.

Augustine, the learned and eloquent bishop of Hippo, is undoubtedly the greatest figure of this age. His life covers the last years of the fourth and the earlier years of the fifth century. Speaking of fasting on the Jewish Sabbath, he says: "The reason of this is easy to find, for the Roman Church fasts on the Sabbath day, as also a few others here and there; but to fast on the Lord's day is a great scandal."\* In another place he claims that "the Lord's day was declared not to Jews, but to Christians, by the resurrection of the Lord, and *from that time* its festivities began to be held."† He thus dates the institution of the Lord's day back to apostolic times and to the very date of the resurrection of the Lord. There is a sermon‡ usually published in the works of St. Augustine and ascribed to him, but with considerable doubt, in which occurs this passage: "And so far have the holy doctors of the church decreed that all the glory of the Jewish Sabbath should be transferred to the Lord's day, that what they observed in figure we celebrate in reality. Resting from all agricultural labor and all business, we engage in

\* Augustine, "Epistle 36, Ad Casulanum."

† "Epistle 55."

‡ "De Tempore."



divine worship alone." Even if this sermon is not properly ascribed to the great Latin Father, it is still a testimony of considerable antiquity to the fact that the Lord's day was regarded as a Christian Sabbath.

Next may be quoted Jerome, A. D. 390, the first Hebrew scholar of the church of his age and the leader in all subsequent Christian scholarship. In an account of the monastic institutions of Egypt he gives this account of their employment of the Lord's day: "On the Lord's day they occupy themselves in prayer and reading only." "On the Lord's day *only* they went to church, from which they dwelt at a distance."\* Positive proof is thus furnished that whatever observance of the seventh day may have existed at this time, the Lord's day was considered in every way most worthy of respect, and when widely-scattered worshippers could not meet more frequently, was the sole day appointed for public worship. Jerome, in a comment on the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm, writes: "'This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.' The Lord, indeed, hath made all days, but other days may be for Jews or heretics or heathen. The Lord's day, the day of resurrection, the Christians' day, is our day, because on it the Lord, a

\* Jerome, "Epistles 22 and 108."

victor, ascended to the Father. If heathen call it the day of the sun, we most willingly confess it, for on this day light dawned on the world, and on this day the Sun of Righteousness arose."\*

Chrysostom, the "Golden-mouthed," so called from his brilliant rhetorical gifts, lived about A. D. 398. In a comment on the appointment of the first Sabbath, he says: "Hence in these first things God has enigmatically offered us a lesson, teaching that the first day in the cycle of the week is placed above all the rest and set apart for the work of the Spirit."† It is especially to be noted that this author thus connects the Lord's day not with the Jewish Sabbath, but with the primal Sabbath of creation. Chrysostom also discoursed on the passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians where Paul appoints the first day of the week for collections, 1 Cor. 16 : 1, 2, and upon the sermon of Paul at Troas on that day, Acts 20 : 7, using these instances to enforce the obligation of the Lord's day.‡

Some of the above writers and others of the same century, especially Gregory of Nyssa, mention the observance of Saturday, but always in connection with the Lord's day. Gregory, in-

\* "Exposition of Psalm 118."

† Chrysostom, "Homily 10 on Genesis."

‡ See his homilies on the texts referred to.

deed, calls them "twin-days," but Augustine, Jerome, and indeed the greater number of the post-Nicene Fathers, perfectly agree with all ante-Nicene authority in rejecting the Jewish Sabbath. The same remark will apply to the authorities of the fifth century, which will not be given in detail, as they would only be wearisome repetitions of the words already quoted. Among the witnesses that might be cited in this century are Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus of Turin, and Leo of Rome. With these agree Socrates, Sozomenon, and Theodoret, the ecclesiastical historians of the same age.

One passage only must suffice. It is an extract from a poem written by Cœlius Sedulius, a presbyter who lived near the end of the fifth century. He writes:

"At last, after the sorrowful Sabbath, a happy day began to shine, which has received from the Lord, its Master, the crown of his high name, and first deserved to see the new-born world and the risen Christ. For while Genesis calls the seventh day Sabbath, it is clear that this is the chief day of the world to which the glory of the King has now also given preëminence by the splendor of his victory."\*

As certainly as any historical fact can be es-

\* C. Sedulius, "Hymn of the Resurrection," Book V.

tablished, it is proved that the Christian church before the sixth century honored the Lord's day above the Jewish Sabbath, that they declared the latter to be annulled and no longer binding, and that its meaning had been fully transferred to the former. A Christian Sabbath has come into existence, and to it henceforth attaches all the authority and obligation of the eternal Sabbatic law.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HISTORY OF THE LORD'S DAY FROM THE FIFTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT.

“God therefore first rested, then blessed this rest, that in all ages it might be sacred among men; in other words, he consecrated every seventh day to rest, that his own example might be a perpetual rule.”

MELANCHTHON.

HERE are a thousand years, the strangest and most momentous years, perhaps, of all human history, our midnight ignorance of which we have embodied in an epithet—the “Dark Ages.” Upon the seething deluge of those forceful centuries in which modern Europe was making, still floated the ark of the Lord's day.

It is hardly necessary to give detailed testimonies from the writers of the Middle Ages as to the regard shown to the Lord's day. Rulers, such as Leo the philosopher, Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, and many others, enacted laws forbidding secular work on that day. Numerous councils of the church confirmed and enforced its authority. Such writers as the venerable Bede, Bernard, Alexander of Hales, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas stated the opinion of their time in

favor of its observance, and declared it a custom derived from the earliest days of the church.

So far from there being any relaxation of its requirements, the danger seems to have been in the direction of a Pharisaic strictness which was foreign to its true spirit. Thus Tostatus, bishop of Avila, who lived in the fourteenth century, declares that food may be prepared on the Lord's day, but the dishes must not be washed until the next day; nor may a cook who is only hired by the day even prepare food; to be permitted to do so he must be hired by the month or year. It is easy to see how fully accordant with the growing spirit of Roman Christianity was the old Jewish ceremonialism. This spirit manifested itself most fully in the multiplication of festivals in burdensome numbers. This went so far, indeed, that even since the Reformation the catechism taught for the last three hundred years in Italy, written by order of Pope Clement VIII., by the celebrated Bellarmine, gives as its version of the Fourth Commandment, "Remember to keep holy the festivals." (*"Ricordati di santificare le feste."*) It is evident that this must necessarily end in levelling the Lord's day to the grade of the other inferior holidays, and, by insisting on the sanctity of all, really destroying the sacredness of any. That such has been the result is confirmed by the

existing status of the Christian Sabbath all over the continent of Europe.

Yet the real state of theological opinion during these centuries is pretty fairly expressed by the words of Alcuin, A. D. 796, who says that "Christian custom has fitly transferred the observation of the Jewish Sabbath to the Lord's day;"\* and Petrus Alphonsus (12th century), who writes that "the Lord's day, that is, the day of resurrection, is the Sabbath of Christians;"† and Anselm, A. D. 1100, who says, "The vacation of the Lord's day is the moral part of the Decalogue in the time of grace, as the seventh day was in the time of the law;" and "the observance of a day indeterminately, that at some time we should attend on God, is moral in nature and immutable, but the observance of a determinate time is moral by discipline, by the adding of divine institution. When that time ought to be is not for man to determine, but God."‡ These three examples fairly represent the position of the church of the Middle Ages.

Upon this night of history, with its strange and sometimes wildly beautiful dreams, the morning dawned at last. Heralded by spasmodic at-

\* Quoted in Heylin, "History of the Sabbath."

† See Heylin, *ibid.*

‡ Quoted in Young's, "Dies Dominica," 46.

tempts at reformation of the church, at last the son of a German miner, with words which were "half battles," struck away the foundation of divine right on which the claims of pontiff and king were builded, and asserted a right of private judgment, growing out of the personal relations of every man to "God who justifieth."

It is a matter for the deepest regret that the reformers failed to perceive the true doctrine of the Sabbath; that they, for the most part, ignored its moral obligation, and sustained its existence largely on the grounds of expediency. Yet their position is not entirely inexcusable. Primarily, the Reformation was a reaction against the ceremonialism of Rome, and by the very logic of their situation they placed themselves in much the same attitude towards the Lord's day that the apostles and the early church occupied towards the Jewish Sabbath. It had become degraded to a common level with multitudinous feast-days, and it was hard for them to feel any more respect for it than for the superstitious observances with which it was accompanied. In clearing away the rubbish, that they might build anew on its primitive foundations the church of Christ, there was great danger that valuable and even precious stones should be cast aside. This is the apology which Baxter makes for them:



“For Calvin and Beza, and the great divines of the foreign churches, you must remember that they came newly out of popery, and had seen the Lord’s day and a superabundance of other human holidays imposed on the churches to be ceremoniously observed, and they did not all of them so clearly as they ought discern the difference between the Lord’s day and those holidays, or church festivals, and so did too promiscuously conjoin them in their reproofs of the burdens imposed on the church . . . The devil hath been a great undoer by overdoing. When he knew not how else to cast out the holy observation of the Lord’s day with zealous people, he found out the trick of devising so many days, called holy days, to set up by it, that the people might perceive that the observation of them all as holy was never to be expected.”\*

The reformers are not always consistent with themselves or with each other in their views on the Lord’s day. The fact is, they could not help feeling something of the force of an institution of so great antiquity and such strong divine sanctions, and they could not do away with the absolute necessity of a day for worship. Hence their practical teachings are far better than their theories on the subject. Yet the Continental Sunday

\* Baxter, “Divine Appointment of the Lord’s Day,” 127, 150.

of to-day is sufficient proof that reasons of expediency and utility alone are not a sufficient basis on which to found a Sabbath. The theories of the reformers have left an evil legacy in practices from which they themselves would have revolted.

Luther, in the often-quoted passage in the "Table Talk," says almost savagely, "If anywhere the day is made holy for the mere day's sake, if anywhere any one sets up its observance on a Jewish foundation, then I order you to work on it, to ride on it, to dance on it, to feast on it, to do anything that shall remove this encroachment on Christian liberty." Perhaps this is none too strong as directed against superstitious bondage to "times and seasons," but it is certainly so stated as to lead away from any reverence for the Sabbatic institution. Yet he expressly excepts the Lord's day from the feasts which he wishes abolished. "Let all feasts be abolished, and the Lord's day only retained."\* "Would that there were no feast among Christians except the Lord's Day!"† And this same Luther in his later days explains his whole position with regard to the law thus: "If at the outset I inveighed against the law both from the pulpit and in my writings, the reason was that the Christian church at the time

\* "Address to the German Nobility."

† "De Bona Opera."

was overladen with superstitions, under which Christ was altogether buried and hidden, and that I groaned to save and liberate pious and God-fearing souls from this tyranny over the conscience. But I have never rejected the law.”\* This passage is a perfect explanation of the seeming anti-nomianism of the reformers.

The same remark will apply to Calvin. His whole soul revolted against the superstitious holidays of Rome which had so multiplied that Beza says “the third part of the year passed away in idle festivals.” Calvin says in his “Institutes:” “Nor do I so value the septenary number as to bind the church to its servitude, nor shall I condemn the churches which observe other days for their meetings.” He declares that there is nothing moral in the Fourth Commandment. Nevertheless he could say at another time, “He who setteth at naught the Sabbath day has cast under foot all God’s service as much as is in him; and if the Sabbath day be not observed, all the rest shall be worth nothing.”† The very comments in the “Institutes” on the Fourth Commandment, so often quoted to show his opposition to the Sabbath, affirm in many forms of speech the necessity of such an institution and assert its apostolic origin. It is to be regretted, however, that the great

\* Michelet, “Life of Luther.” † “Sermon,” Deut. 5.

Swiss reformer should not by his fidelity have left as deep a mark in favor of a holy Lord's day on the Continent as did Knox in Scotland.

It is needless to quote from the Lutheran and Reformed Confessions. They agree in their main ground: the Sabbath is abrogated, but for moral discipline, for stated worship, and for the sake of rest, the Lord's day, received from the earliest days of the church, should be observed. The language of the Helvetic Confession is in substance the language of all: "We do not believe either that one day is sacred above another, or that mere rest is in itself pleasing to God. We keep a Lord's day, not a Sabbath day, by an unconstrained observance."

That we believe the Reformation to have been a great spiritual movement and a great advance towards gospel truth, and that we believe the leaders in that movement to have been good and great men, does not and cannot give to their words any authority on such a question as this save such as they may derive from the Word of God. We must remember that this was not the only Commandment of the Ten in regard to which they were careless, not to say erroneous, in their views.\* The evils of the antinomian teaching

\* Without subscribing to Romish slanders, there is too much truth in the charge of certain lawless tendencies among

into which they were too frequently led in their antagonism to salvation by works and their assertion of the "right of private judgment" have not wholly left Protestantism even at this late day. It is easy to note in their language on this subject a very different tone from that used by the Fathers of the early church. It cannot fail to be seen that they did not fully restore primitive purity of doctrine and practice. Not having the insight to discover the true abiding Sabbath and bring it forth to the world, together with the gospel truth which they rescued from the past, they only endeavored to destroy the corrupted institution that they found. Yet we cannot be too grateful that they left us the institution itself. As long as that abides its meanings will ever come out of the realm of spiritual thought and embody themselves under its forms with constant instruction to the children of men.

some of the reformers. The freedom of divorce, largely sanctioned by their teaching, is the reproach of Protestant States. It is not necessary to quote in proof the remarks of Luther, Bucer, and Melanchthon on the marriage relation. The origin of the English Church itself is not without the stain of the too facile connivance of Cranmer with Henry VIII. in his marriage with Anne Boleyn. The case of Milton is also in point. He is well known to have opposed the Sabbath. He ended by denouncing marriage and by entire neglect of worship. No question is more difficult or more important to Protestantism than the reconciliation of freedom and authority, grace and works.

And the Reformed churches did another service to the cause of Sabbath observance. In their catechisms the Decalogue was taught and expounded. It was placed in the service for the Holy Eucharist of the English Church in 1552, and the homilies of the church say: "Albeit this commandment of God doth not bind Christians so straitly to observe the utter ceremonies of the Sabbath day as it was given to the Jews, as touching the forbearing of work and labor in time of necessity and as keeping the precise seventh day after the manner of the Jews; for we now keep the first day, which is the Sunday, and we make that our Sabbath, that is, our day of rest, in honor of our Saviour Christ, who as upon that day rose from death, conquering the same most triumphantly; yet notwithstanding, whatever is found in the commandment appertaining to the law of nature as a thing most godly, most just, and most needful for the setting forth of God's glory, it ought to be retained and kept of all good Christian people."\*

So also the Synod of Dort, A. D. 1618-19, in one of the supplementary sessions fixed six points as to the Sabbath, viz.: 1. That the Fourth Commandment contains both ceremonial and moral elements. 2. The former consists in the rigid

\* Homily "On the Time and Place of Prayer."

employment of the exact seventh day. 3. The moral is the assignment of a stated day for worship. 4. The Jewish Sabbath is abolished, and Christians are under solemn obligation to keep the Lord's day. 5. This day has been observed by the church from apostolic times. 6. All work, save of charity and necessity, is condemned.

With still greater precision the Assembly of divines at Westminster, A. D. 1643-1648, in that confession which was adopted as the creed of the Reformed Church in Scotland, and of the Presbyterian Church in America, determined:

“As it is of the law of nature that in general a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God, so in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ was the last day of the week, and from the resurrection of Christ was changed into the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath.”\*

This “Confession” also gives extended and precise directions as to the manner of observance, and the “Shorter Catechism” with great fulness

\* “Confession,” XXI. 7.

enforces the same teachings. Perhaps no other utterance of the church has had so great an influence in securing the real sanctification of the Sabbath. With this agree almost the entire bulk of evangelical confessions and the great majority of Protestant divines. It is difficult to see how the argument from theological opinion could be made more strong than it is.

It may be fearlessly asserted that the real teachings of the Reformation on this question are not to be found in the writings of its leaders or in its earliest confessions. They are to be sought in its fair fruitage, the great Puritan epoch, whose later testimony we have just cited, and especially in the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, and the nineteenth century church-life which is its result. The principles of the Reformation in their final outcome, by leading to the study of God's Word, have given the world a revived Lord's day, a true Sabbath, which is one of the most striking features of the religious life of to-day.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE SABBATH OF TO-DAY.

“Where now the beauty of the Sabbath kept  
With conscientious reverence, as a day  
By the Almighty Lawgiver pronounced  
Holy and blest?”

WORDSWORTH.

THE history of the Lord's day through the past Christian centuries has necessarily been brief. The limits of this discussion do not permit any detailed account of the great Puritan and Evangelical movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is sufficient to say that these have given a deeper, and in some cases perhaps a superstitious, reverence to the institution. There are, however, in the status of the Sabbath to-day some important questions involved which touch its perpetuity of obligation.

The present age has been prolific in attacks upon the sanctity of the Lord's day. The more dangerous of these are those which are inflicted in the house of its pretended friends. The principle of the Reformation, the “right of private judgment,” has been treated as if it furnished an absolute and complete rule of human thinking.

This illegitimate development of the great idea of the reformers has led to the denial of all external authority in religion. Such freedom from authority cannot exist. It would be as absurd to build up a system of physical science without observation of nature and its phenomena, as to build up a science of human duty without that record of supernatural phenomena and that revelation of eternal moral truths which are given in the Word of God. True, no man or church has the right to interpret for me the facts either of nature or of grace, but by the *facts* in both spheres my thinking is, nevertheless, to be formed. The Bible is still "the rule, and the only sufficient rule, of our faith and practice."

The tendency of extreme Protestantism is too often to negative the value of every outward institution of the church. This spirit of denial has taken all inward significance from the sacraments, and reduced the Lord's day to a mere valuable instrument of religious discipline, rather than what it is, the teacher of lessons of its own. Let the advocates of this view remember that they cannot and will not retain the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship for a single generation after the conception of its moral obligation has departed. Expediency is but a rule of occasional action; it cannot be made the basis of a perma-

ment and universal institution. If there has been any relaxation of the public conscience on this question, it has most largely come from the fact that the Sabbath does not in the common mind of to-day rest down on its divine authority. If that conviction should be wholly lost, the full end of the Sabbath would be near.

Alike dangerous is the substitution of the dictum of the church for the warrant of Holy Scripture. This opposite tendency is less in the peril it threatens to the sacred day only from the fact that it is less consonant to the spirit of the times than the extreme un-churchly position. To make the Lord's day only an ecclesiastical contrivance is to give no assurance to the moral reason and to lay no obligation upon a free conscience. The church cannot maintain this institution by its own edict. Council, assembly, convocation, and synod can impose a law on the conscience only when they are able to back their decree with "Thus saith the Lord."

It is obvious, moreover, that churches can only reach communicants with their decrees. That a day of rest may exist, it must be universal. It can be so only by being clothed with the majesty and power of divine legislation.

Another factor in the conflict of to-day is the so-called advanced criticism. It is still too early

to announce the outcome of current hypotheses in regard to the development of the Hebrew religion and religious writings. Whether they shall end, as did much the same treatment of the New Testament a generation ago, in bringing us nearer to the living facts of the record, and in the discovery of deeper grounds of verity for Holy Scripture, or whether they shall compel reconstruction of our method of regarding the ancient books of the Bible, is still a matter for future demonstration. It is never too early, however, to suggest that we have the warrant of Jesus Christ and his apostles for a free use of the Old Testament in the establishment of doctrine. This testimony covers the moral precepts of the law and the spiritual revelations of the prophets; that is, it covers the whole ground necessary to establish from Scripture the divine authority of the Sabbatic law.\* Even many of the advocates of the higher criticism contend that their views are not inconsistent with a high theory of inspiration and strict meth-

\* It is proper to suggest that the speculations of this school usually ascribe to the priestly codex containing the Elohist account of creation and the first Sabbath a greater age than to the Decalogue. This would do away with the denial of a pre-Mosaic Sabbath, and would establish the tradition of creation as its foundation. This is perfectly fair as an *ad hominem* argument against any attack on the Sabbath made on the basis of modern criticism.

ods of interpretation. Yet, without doubt, many of the opinions promulgated have a tendency to weaken, in the common mind, the conception of the authority of Scripture, and consequently to destroy the sacredness of the Sabbath day. Over against this movement it is gratifying to place the larger interest in the study of God's Word, and the growth of elaborate organizations and the multiplication of appliances to that end. What Christian heart can doubt that, out of all this ferment and activity of thought, that Word of God which is "tried" will come forth more glorious in its brightness and more transcendent in its authority.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that these driftings of human thought have largely weakened the sense of moral duty in the observance of the Lord's day. It is not worth while, perhaps, to speak of the growth of pseudo-scientific skepticism in all its forms, which strikes not alone at the Sabbath, but at any eternal ground whatever for any moral law. From its very nature as a denial of universal human instincts, it cannot have any long reign; yet it has lived long enough to aid in weakening the hold of the moral law on the conscience of the age, and extracting the sacredness of meaning from the admitted beneficial institution of a day of rest.

Other forces than these are at work. There is, in this as in every age, the undertone of the sinful heart against the law of God. This does not hesitate to declare its open hostility to the Lord's day. Let not the issue be mistaken. The attack on the Sabbath is part of the larger conflict waged against God, the Bible, and the church. This is the outcome of the insidious assaults of the public press, the blasphemous declarations of socialists and infidels, and the plausible theories of pretended philanthropists. While it is not for one moment to be admitted that Christianity is weaker to-day than in the former years—for these are the very crowning days of Christian history—yet it is compelled to meet the spirit of the times, disguised in more subtle forms, and more dangerously allied with the mundane culture of to-day, the revived pagan culture of this nineteenth century.

At no point does the time-spirit come more closely in conflict with the spirit of eternity than in the Sabbath, which is the embodiment of an eternal thought in a temporal ordinance. It is a continual protest against a mere worldly culture, and against any aim of life that ends in the present. Never were the allurements of the spirit of this world more mighty than to-day. Business, culture, pleasure, all fill the daily thoughts of

man with an absorbing interest such as past ages have not known.

The weekly witness of eternity has, therefore, a supreme value never known before. It is not the least of those instruments by which God would safely guide these forceful years in which we live into a surer faith and a larger life.

With the question of the Lord's day are wrapped up, to-day, other issues of vast import. The social problems connected with labor, in its relations to large accumulations of capital, by which capital becomes the master of labor rather than its instrument; the growing evil of divorce, which is the shame of Protestant nations; the world-old evil of intemperance, which has in these days become, through its organization into a controlling financial and political power, a standing threat to free institutions—all these have relationships to the Sabbath readily seen by the opponents of religion and morality, but not sufficiently regarded by the friends of divine law and social order. It is, perhaps, the strongest existing barrier between the encroachments of covetousness and the laboring man. It is allied as an institution with marriage, and is the guardian and fostering teacher of domestic virtue. Between the holy day and the unholy power of the liquor-traffic there is a deadly antagonism. We

are to cherish the Lord's day as one chief agent in the eternal warfare against the deadly foes that imperil the perpetuity of civilization. Defence of a holy Sabbath is at the same time an attack on the most pernicious evils of our time. It is, in the loftiest sense, self-defence.

If the Lord's day meets more subtle and determined opposition to-day than ever before, it has, on the other hand, a more full embodiment in the practical life of man than it has ever enjoyed in past ages. It is, in some form, as universal as Christian civilization. Other and alien nations are adopting it. As a day of religion it is, perhaps, more largely used for preaching and teaching now than at any other time in the world's history. How shall it be preserved?

While it is certain that the Lord's day as a divine institution is under the care of Providence and never can wholly perish from the earth, to make men feel and practically acknowledge its obligation the highest religious sanctions are necessary. "To the law and the testimony" is the rallying cry for this and every age when divine truth is in peril or moral duty questioned. Let us light the candle of human duty again and again at the sun—from that Will and Word of God which alone can adequately teach men in morals and "make us wise unto salvation."



And what does that Word reveal to us? Here is an institution, ordained at the beginning of history, invested with meanings which take hold on the past and point forward towards the future, which has been declared by the spoken utterance of the eternal God and placed in his moral law, which has had the seal of the victory of Christ placed upon it, and bears in it the promise of a new creation. Although it is of the highest value to the whole nature of man, it constantly antagonizes his selfish blindness, and has ever been in conflict with the covetous and profane spirit of the world. In spite of all this opposition, the avarice of man, the love of novelty, the impatience of restraint, and the hatred of worship, the Sabbath has lived on with constantly renewed vigor. Its permanence is no mean proof of the divinity of its origin. Such is the Lord's day, the Sabbath of to-day. That institution which has met and survived all the shocks of time has the spring of its life in the eternal world, and shall last until it gives place to the full reality it incloses, and the abiding Sabbath of time blends with the Sabbath of eternity.

## CHAPTER IX.

## SABBATH OF ETERNITY.

“That greatest Sabbath has no evening.” AUGUSTINE.

“The Sundays of man’s life,  
Threaded together on one string,  
Make bracelets to adorn the wife  
Of the eternal, glorious King.  
On Sunday heaven’s gates stand ope ;  
Blessings are plentiful and rife—  
More plentiful than hope.”

GEORGE HERBERT.

AN eternal Sabbath is the end and aim of all the works of God. As the memorial of its Edenic bliss when it touched the world in Paradise, as its representative in time, and as the prophet of its true consummation in heaven, the abiding Sabbath has been given to man.

One blessing there is, promised again and again, which has brooded over our earth from the beginning, and which has nowhere been perfectly realized. This is the blessing of rest. And the failure to realize its fulness has not been through any infidelity of God to his promise, but because of the disobedience and unbelief of those to whom it came. God rested at the beginning from all his works, and this rest seems to have

been in part shared by man in Eden. But from this Sabbatic state of perfect harmony of spirit and nature man was expelled because of disobedience. The Sabbath meantime remained as the type of true rest. Again, rest was offered to Israel, but they did not attain to it, for because of their unbelief they perished in the wilderness. Still the Sabbath remained as the promise of a rest still to be achieved. In the time of David the promise is repeated, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Psa. 95:7, 8. That rest which Joshua did not give to Israel has been secured by our Joshua for the people of God; for he has also completed his work of redemption and rests from his task as, in the beginning, from the work of creation. Into that heavenly rest "within the veil," our Forerunner, Jesus, the Son of God, has passed. True rest is henceforth secure, through him who has promised to those coming to him, "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matt. 11:29. This is the rest from the guilt and service of sin, the rest of faith. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Heb. 4:3.

This soul-rest however, is not the whole of "my rest" which God says the believer shall share. Sin is not yet wholly destroyed in us.

The resurrection of Christ has in it a promise for the bodies as well as for the souls of men. The physical nature of man is not yet free from the bondage of corruption. Labor, pain, weariness, and disease still weigh it down. Beyond the enjoyment of spiritual rest here, there awaits the believing soul a higher blessedness hereafter. It is the testimony of the Spirit, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth, . . . that they may rest from their labors." For the reason, therefore, that its fulfilment has not fully come, the Sabbath must abide as an external institution of the church, the standing type of the final victory of the believer and his eternal blessedness. "There remaineth therefore a Sabbath-keeping for the people of God." Heb. 4:9.\*

But this Sabbath which abides is not the Jewish Sabbath. Its ceremonial rites and sacrificial types have been consummated in Christ. The rest for the whole nature of man, spirit and body, which is foreshadowed by the resurrection of Christ, is not yet consummated. Consequently we keep the day of finished redemption, the day of his resurrection, the Lord's day, as the only

\* Should this chapter be regarded as too mystical by any, let it be remembered that it is not offered as argument, but rather as a fitting complement to the trend of argument in the whole work. None the less does the author believe the exposition sound.

abiding type of that unattained glory of the sons of God. "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest," in type here and in substance hereafter, lest we too should fail through unbelief as did Adam in Eden and the Israelites in the wilderness.

All earthly Sabbatisms have their origin, their reason, and their fulfilment in that heavenly Sabbatism that began when God rejoiced over his finished work, which has touched the earth with weekly bound all along the centuries, and still abides for the people of God.

The Sabbath, being a memorial of the lost Eden, is also a prophecy that paradise shall be regained. In the last chapters of the Bible we see pictured some of the glories of the Eden to come. Again appears the tree of life, and again the river that makes glad the garden and city of God. Time began with the first creation of the heavens and the earth, and shall end with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. Between this eternity past and eternity to come stands the Sabbath testifying in time to that eternal world of spirit for which all things exist. And that recovered Eden has meanings for the whole creation. Man's sin has cursed the earth, and in his redemption the earth shall share. For this, its glorification, nature waits with out-

stretched hand of earnest expectation, for even the physical universe shall be crowned and glorified in the coming manifestation of the sons of God. Death, pain, and sorrow shall vanish in that new spiritualized heaven and earth. Then God shall be at peace with man, man's body with his spirit, and humanity with nature. All creation shall put on the robes of festal gladness. To herald this last splendid triumph of the Redeemer in the restoration of the Sabbath state, lost by the fall, there still remains the day of resurrection, the Lord's day, an abiding Sabbath for the people of God.

If the Sabbath had fulfilled all its meanings in Christ, then it would have ceased with him, as did the rites of the Mosaic law. But because it has in it spiritual ideas not yet fulfilled, and whose fulfilment shall be the end of time, therefore the Lord's day as an institution shall stand until the last hour when time shall blend with eternity. Being a permanent institution, its obligation is enduring, and comes to all men with the still spoken words of the Eternal, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

It was noticed in the first chapter of this book that marriage comes to us hand in hand with the Sabbath from the birthday of the world, given to man at the beginning amid the shoutings of the

strong sons of God and the jubilant chant of the morning stars; they both come to us from the bowers of Eden; they have journeyed with us through all the thorny paths of the centuries, constantly opening new gateways through which souls have escaped from the prison-house of earthly sorrows and cares into the boundless freedom of the Spirit's love and light; they point not indistinctly to the future; they lead us by the hand of our hopes towards their higher revelations beyond the bounds of time, when marriage shall be crowned and ennobled in the perpetual bridal of the Lamb and the church, when the Sabbath shall receive its full interpretation and be glorified for ever in the eternal Sabbath, abiding still when the "former things have passed away."





# APPENDIX.

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## A.

THE following is an extract from a translation by Mr. Fox Talbot of the fifth tablet in the Assyrian account of the creation.

“ He made the year. Into four quarters he divided it.

Twelve months he established, with their constellations, three by three,  
And for the days of the year he appointed festivals.

In the centre he placed luminaries.

The moon he appointed to rule the night,  
And to wander through the night until the dawn of day.

Every month without fail he made holy assembly days.

In the beginning of the month, at the rising of the night,

It shot forth its horns to illuminate the heavens.

On the seventh day he appointed a holy day,  
And to cease from all work he commanded.”

## B.

The following is a translation, by Rev. A. H. Sayce, of the rubric for the seventh day in the Assyrian calendar discovered by Smith.

“The seventh day. A feast of Merodach and Zir-Panitu—a festival.

A Sabbath. The prince of many nations  
The flesh of birds and cooked fruits eats not.  
The garments of his body he changes not.  
White robes he puts not on.  
Sacrifices he offers not. The king in his chariot  
rides not.

In royal fashion he legislates not. A place of  
garrison he appoints not.

General (by word of) mouth appoints not.  
Medicine for sickness of body he applies not.  
To make a sacred spot it is suitable.

In the night in the presence of Merodach and  
Istar

The king his offering makes. Sacrifices he  
offers.

Raising his hand the high place of the god he  
worships.”

## C.

Among the reasons for doubting the early existence of the work known as the "Apostolical Constitutions" are the following :

1. The very fact that it commands the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, against the teaching of the New Testament and the universal expression of opinion of the ante-Nicene Fathers. It is to be remarked that another fabrication of the same kind, the *Pseudo-Ignatius*, likewise favors the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath.

2. The fact, commented upon by Daillé, that almost every day in the year is made by this document either a feast or a fast. This is thoroughly opposed to all our knowledge of the ante-Nicene Church.

3. In its preceptive manner it is opposed to the whole tone of the earliest Christian literature. It everywhere denotes a ritualistic church-life very different from the simplicity of faith and practice which characterized the primitive church.

4. The recently discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," if genuine, would fully confirm the critical doubt which has existed as to the applicability of the external evidence supposed to sustain the antiquity of the "Constitutions." The "Teaching" would seem to be the earlier, sim-

pler, and more Scriptural work upon which the "Constitutions" have been conjectured to be based. The references in Irenæus (Pfaff's "2d Fragment"), Eusebius ("Evang. Hist.," III. 25), and Athanasius ("39th Festal Letter"), may all be applied to the "Teaching." There would thus be left only the testimony of Epiphanius, A. D. 370, which probably does not refer to the "Constitutions," at least in their present shape. There is no other reference to them in the writings of the fourth century, and only one in the fifth (in what is known as the "Incomplete Work on Matthew"). There is therefore no certain ante-Nicene reference to the "Constitutions," and only two (possibly but one) before the end of the fifth century. This, taken in connection with the internal evidence, seems to justify the conclusion that they cannot be assigned a much earlier date than the latter part of the fourth century.

5. The spurious character of the "Constitutions" is shown by the fact that at least three documents, of different ages, are discernible in them, one of which (the seventh book) appears to be in great measure a redaction and enlargement of the "Teaching."





Col 2: 16, 17

Rom 14: 5, 6

see 187

also 201-212  
(change of day)

